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Nicholas Rescher

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PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Edited by
Heinrich Ganthaler • Neil Roughley
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The aim of the series is to publish high-quality work that deals with questions in practical philosophy from a broadly analytic perspective. These include questions in meta-ethics, normative ethics and "applied" ethics, as well as in political philosophy, philosophy of law and the philosophy of action. Through the publication of work in both German and English the series aims to facilitate discussion between English- and German-speaking practical philosophers.

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PREFACE

For many years value theory has figured high on the agenda of my interests, a fact attested by *Introduction to Value Theory* published by Prentice Hall in 1969. This interest has continued in recent years *inter alia*, finding earlier expressions in the articles constituting chapters 2-4 of the present book. (See the footnotes for publication details.) The remaining six chapters are new, and combine to form overall a synoptic overview of fundamental issues in the theory of value.

I am grateful to Estelle Burris for her patience and competence in preparing this material for publication.

Nicholas Rescher
September 2004
Pittsburgh PA

Chapter 1

BY THE STANDARDS OF THEIR DAY

1. RETROSPECTIVE CONDEMNATION

How far do our ethical and evaluative standards reach across the divides of space and time? Can we appropriately judge people remote from our own setting by the criteria we would apply locally? Do our norms project across spatiotemporal distance to apply to them as well?

One of the many problematic aspects of the "political correctness" that has become so fashionable in this turn-of-the-century era is the tendency to condemn and disparage various individuals or groups of earlier eras for having values, opinions, and customs of which our own times do not approve. The myriad available examples include:

—condemning the Founding Fathers for their acceptance of slavery

—condemning the politicians of the 1890-1920 era for the resistance to "votes from women"

—condemning the industrialists of the 19th century for their willingness to employ child labor

A good case can be made, however, for rejecting this practice of assessing the actions and agents of the past by our own standards. For adjudging their ethical standing and moral status as good or bad, benign or evil, in the light of our current standards is something highly problematic from the angle of rationality and questionable from that of justice.

2. NORMS AND BELIEFS: THE ANALOGY OF COGNITION

How after all could we reasonably except people of distant times and places to adopt our practices and conform to our standards? Condemning

18th century agents for failing to act on 21st century ethical norms makes about as much sense as reproving 18th century generals for failing to employ 21st century strategies or judging medieval cartographers by 20th century norms.

In this regard one cannot but heed the parallelism between the cognitive and the evaluative situation. Clearly we cannot reproach the physicists of the 18th century for not employing 20th century standards and practices, nor even lay fault at the door of the physician of a decade ago for not conforming to the norms that subsequent discovery has made standard at the present.

A look at the intellectual landscape of these times shows all too clearly that many of us are deeply enmeshed in a normative egocentrism that leads us to view those of earlier times who do not share the "enlightened" standards of our day as being if not willfully evil then at least ethically blind. As many see it, the benighted folk of the past must simply have realized that it is wrong to exclude women from the vote, Asians from the immigration quota, Jews from the social clubs, homosexuals from military service, and the like. How can they have failed to see that inequality is unfair and ipso facto wicked?

And of course if those discriminatory practices were no more than unreasoned prejudice this view would be entirely correct. But that is assuredly not how it was. Be it right or wrong, those "wicked malefactors" of the past had, or thought they had, perfectly good reasons for their discriminatory practices—reasons which to them seemed every bit as good as excluding child abusers from schoolmasters posts or alcoholics from bus driving seem to us. For the most part, at least, they acted not out of an unthinking antagonism to these groups, but out of a conviction that allowing them entry into those prohibited categories would be significantly harmful to legitimate social interests. On the whole, their mind-set was not evil and their motives were not—or need not have been—outright wicked. They acted under the guidance of the good (*sub ratione boni*). They may have been—and doubtless were—mistaken in those beliefs, but even so the fact remains that the faults at issue were of intellect and understanding not one of character. And it is no more valid to reprehend such past misunderstandings than it would be to reprehend the misunderstandings of the 18th century physicians who sought to treat gout by salt cures.

3. WHO APPOINTED US AS ARBITER?

After all, who or what has appointed us as supreme arbiter? Where is it written that our own standards are universally authoritative? We look down our ethical noses at these benighted legislators of 17th Century England who mandated drastic penalties for such minor offenses as petty theft. But where will we ourselves stand in the sight of a posterity that may well come to regard our practices in regard to abortion as nothing but casual infanticide? Our own standards should of course be seen as compelling for us—for evaluating what we ourselves and our contemporaries do here and now. If we did not see them in this light, then they just would not be "our standards." But with what right or justification can we see them as compelling for other times and places? How could we validate a normative egocentrism that elevates our present standards of judgment to a position of universal supremacy? What justifies a normative Ptolemaicism that puts us at the center of the evaluative universe?

4. THE AGENT, THE ACT, AND THE ACTION

A pivotal distinction must be heeded here, namely that between the moral assessment of a generic sort of act on the one hand and on the other its performance in the particular action of a particular agent on a particular occasion. The questions "Should we approve someone's performing that action here-and-now?" and "Should one think ill of someone who performed the action then-and-there?" pose very different issues—and they require different answers. Take polygamy. Clearly we do—quite rightly—see it is a wrongful and unacceptable practice. But by this we do—or should—mean to condemn its performance here and now, by people of this time and place in our own existential setting. We would and should quite properly condemn someone among our contemporary neighbors who commits this type of act. But it would certainly be morally obtuse of us if we were comparatively to condemn the biblical Abraham. Our disapproval of polygamy cannot reasonably be directed at *his* polygamy simply because the conditions and circumstances of its occurrence—the setting of circumstances and values in which it occurred—was utterly different from our own and relates to evaluative considerations of which this patriarch did not and could not have had any inkling. We can and should judge the abstract practice—the generic mode of action—by our own standards and according to our own lights. But this proceeds at the generic level of the abstract,

not at the specific level of the concrete. And there it is only sensible and just to judge remote agents and acts by their standards—those that prevail in particular setting and circumstances is at issue here. Accordingly, we can—and should—disapprove of those acts in general without thereby derogating those remote agents and impugning their morals.

An important theoretical distinction is called for. In evaluating general practice it is only right and proper that we should do so by our own lights—our own standards and values, those which we take ourselves to be able to validate as proper and correct. But in evaluating the actions of people of another time and place we should manifest urbanity, avoiding the parochialism of imposing on our own standards and being willing to apply those of the agents own time and place. After all, different issues are at stake and here, as elsewhere, different questions can require different answers.

5. WHAT CAN REASONABLY BE EXPECTED?

When engaged in evaluating the moral or ethical condition of someone from another time and place, it is only sensible to ask: "What is it reasonable to expect of this individual?" And obviously that he should conform to the norms and values of *our* place and time is simply *not* a reasonable expectation. How could those remote individuals possibly be expected to adopt and conform to those as-yet unarticulated values and to them unknown standards? Where are they to get a crystal ball that would enable them to discern the substantially indiscernible evaluative future?

We can, in principle, operate in matters of judgment and evaluation in relation to the action and merits of people who are remote in time and setting in terms of

(1) *our own* personal standards

(2) the general standards of *our* time and place (of our social context)

(3) the general standards of *their* time and place (of their social context).

Here (2) is unsuitable because it would require people to act on the basis of considerations entirely outside the scope of their knowledge and understanding. And (1) is inappropriate both for the same reason and because it asks of people more than could ever reasonably be expected of them. For

only (3)—the one and only remaining alternative—is practicable in this connection. Only the abstract act can rightly be judged by us according to our own standards and not its performance by some remote agents. To make one's moral assessment of the people and actions of another place and time in line with one's own values and standards is to proceed in a way that is clearly parochial, urbanity-deficient, narrow minded. And it is also unjust because it calls for expecting of someone something that they could not possibly manage to achieve. We might perhaps hope that people will look beyond the baseline of a normative localism and we would certainly welcome their doing so, but we have no right to expect it of them.

That the reach of one's obligations do not outrun the limits of the possible has been a legal maxim since Roman times. (*Ultra posse nemo obligatur*.) And at the basis of the matter lies the issue of rationality. After all, it is absurd ever to ask for something that exceeds the limits of the possible. And exactly this principle regarding legal obligation holds good for moral obligation as well. That which lies beyond a person's powers due to conditions for which the individual in question is nowise responsible is something for which he cannot bear reasonable reprehension. Justifiable reproach stops at the limits of effective responsibility. And for this reason if no other applying unavailable standards would be both unreasonable and unjust.

6. A KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE

As Immanuel Kant already insisted long ago, the pivotal factor in the moral assessment of an agent's actions pivots on this agent's motives in doing it.[1] The performance of even an inherently meritorious action (helping someone in need) can be reprehensible if done for an unsavory motive (seeking praise) and even an inherently wrongful action (inflicting pain on someone) can be meritorious if done for a benign motive (saving his life in a medical procedure). And while loyalty to the values and practices of our time and place is in ordinary circumstances appropriate and thereby should in general motivate *our* actions, those of the agents of the past are going to depend on the norms of *their* day because these norms alone can possibly play a role in their motivation.

What is inappropriate about judging people and their acts by standards other than their own is that these are not *available* to them. Only the norms of his time and place are accessible to an individual and able to canalize his doings and dealings. It is inappropriate to bring other norms to

bear because it is irrational to demand that an agent should govern his doings by considerations outside his den.

An agent of the past no more deserves automatic condemnation as wicked for doing something that we would deem so in our contemporaries than a savant of the past would deserve condemnation for beliefs we would regard as inappropriate and uninformed in a scientist of our day.

It is not only right but inevitable that one must judge *our* issues by *our* standards (they would not be our standards if we did otherwise). How then could we in all fairness deny a like privilege to others?

7. THE ROLE OF OUR STANDARDS?

An important distinction must be introduced at this point, however. To this stage we have simply spoken of "standards" indiscriminately, as though all standards were created equal. But this is certainly not the case. There are standards and standards. And in particular there are standards of *adequacy* and standards of *excellence*. Any and every apparatus of evaluation permits of distinctions along these qualitative lines as between norms for run-of-the-mill performance and norms for superior performance.

Of others we are, by rights, entitled to expect in moral and ethical matters no more than adequate performance. Here we have to satisfy ourselves with grey mediocrity. Doing more is a matter of supererogation as far as we ourselves are concerned. Only of ourselves are we entitled—indeed obligated—to expect superior performance. Of others we can reasonably expect no more than the run of the mill.

But on what comparison basis can this ordinary/superior destinction be predicated? Of course it will have to be that of the general cast of characters that populate "their world." That is to say we must judge them—those remote agents—by the generally prevalent standards of their time and place. Only where that time and place is our own and the people at issue ourselves are we entitled to view those general standards in a critical spirit and to ask for more—for ethically superior performance. The rest we must judge on the basis of their doing when in Rome that which the Romans do. To ask more of them would be to ask for too much—and the error here would be ours.

Because motivation plays so pivotal a role in moral appraisal, all that we can properly expect of someone in matters of ethical assessment is that they should act in accordance with the values and standards of their time

and place. And that is all that we can reasonably expect of our own contemporaries and neighbors as all. *Only of ourselves can we justifiably expect more*. Here we can and should demand excellence rather than adequacy. In relation to our own actions we should *not* see the standards of our place and time as necessarily binding because we have the (moral) obligation to assess the appropriateness and validity of these standards themselves, and should not see them as gift horses that we should not expect to scrutinize. But with others the matter is different. For while we have a special sort of standing and responsibility towards ourselves, this is not so towards them.

It is, of course, every person's right—nay duty—to do what they can to ensure that the general standards of their environment are excellent rather than mediocre, and manifest an impetus to high quality rather than (as seems to be the case in our own place and time) dropping through the floor to mediocrity and "going to hell in a wheelbarrow." But this aspect of one's own moral duty is not the point of our present concerns, which address the ethical and moral assessment of remote agents. And here in the absence of specific, case-characterizing information as to their intentions and motives we must and should conform our assessment to the standards of the place and time. We have no right to ask our expert more of ordinary people than conformity to the ordinarily prevalent standards.

Thus when it comes to approving or disapproving the actions and character of people, the pertinent apparatus of standards of judgment and evaluation will have to be that of their setting and it will only be in a very special "close-to-home" case (viz. that of ourselves) that we are rationally and ethically entitled to ask for more.

8. ON RENDERING JUSTICE

In judging people by the standards of their time and place, we do of course have to reckon with the fact that those standards may be seriously deficient from our own evaluative point of view. But nevertheless the fact remains that if the standards allotted to them by their historico-cultural setting were deficient (as we ourselves see it), this is something for which we cannot very well blame them—any more than whatever reproach may ultimately be seen to be deserved by the standards of our time and place can be imputed to any one of us. The deficiency of their standards is not their fault but their loss. It is no valid basis for reproaching someone in the context of

moral appraisal, but is something for which the individual is more to be pitied than censured.

The only fair and reasonable course to take in matters of moral evaluation is to judge people in terms of what they did with the opportunities at their disposal—how they played the hand that fate dealt to them (to put it figuratively). In evaluating the acts or morals of someone of another place or time, our obligation (by our own standards and values) is surely to render justice to and fairness to those with whom we deal. And only by judging them against the background of their values and standards can we manage to accord then the fairness and justice that is the right of all.

9. A KEY OBJECTION

"But what if those standards and values of the place and time are transparently evil and malign by our own standards—and indeed by what we take to be the only reasonable ones? What of the value system of Hitler's Germany or Stalin's USSR?" Are such monstrous value-systems to be accepted as furnishing usable norms?

The first question to be asked here is whether it is indeed the case that these malign norms were indeed "the values of the time and place"—that is, of the mid-century Europe of the 1900's. In addressing that question of "time and place" we must not draw our borders too narrowly so as to elevate local eccentricities into cultural norms.

The pivotal question when judging those "wrongdoers of the past" is not "Should they (ideally) have known better?" but rather: "Could they (realistically) have known better." And the consideration that leads us rightly to condemn the sundry egregious malefactors who constitute a prime example here (Polish pogromists, Stalinist executioners, Nazi gauleiters, and the like) is that they could and should have known better and usually doubtless did so as witness to their efforts to conceal their actions beyond the circle of the like-minded. On this basis, the consideration that renders the treatment of the Amerindians by the conquistadors particularly contemptible is the prominent presence among them of numerous friars who did their utmost to provide them of ample opportunity "to know better." But whenever we cannot construct a case for holding that these "malefactors" of other times and places did in fact have such clear opportunity, it is neither reasonable nor just to reprehend them.

10. RELATIVISM REJECTED

"Judge the actions of people by the standards of their place and time." But isn't that just bad old relativism?

This, of course, will very much depend on just what it is that one takes to be at issue with "relativism." Now, standardly, this is construed as a mode of indifferentism: you just pick your standards, and to each his own—it just doesn't matter. And this, of course, is emphatically not what is being maintained here. Such indifferentism fails to be at issue because the value and standards of one's place and time are not matters of free choice to individuals; they are situational givens, not deliberated options. What is contemplated here is accordingly not an indifferentist relativism, but rather the contextualism of a situationally determinate value system. This point deserves a somewhat closer look.

The reality of it is that no belief system, no value framework, and no system of moral norms is an extra-mundane absolute, mandated in unchangeable perfection by circumstances beyond our control. The best we can do is to figure things out on our own. And here we can do no more than make use of the local, particularized, diversified instruments that we humans can manage to develop within the socio-cultural limitations of our place and time. Thus far a contextualism is both inevitable and correct. But this situation emphatically does *not* engender an indifferentist and subjectivist relativism. The crucial point is that one can be a contextualistic pluralist in matters of morality without succumbing to such indifferentist relativism (let alone nihilistic scepticism).

The characteristic flaw of relativism is its insistence on the *rational indifference* of alternatives. Be it contentions, beliefs, doctrines, practices, customs or whatever that is at issue, the relativist insist that "it just doesn't matter" in point of rationality. People are led to adopt one alternative over another by *extra-rational* considerations (custom, habituation, fashion, or whatever); from the rational point of view there is nothing to choose—all the alternatives stand on the same footing. Presented with alternatives of the sort at issue—be it cognitive, moral, or whatever—the relativist insists that at bottom it just doesn't matter—at any rate as far as the rationality of the issue is concerned. The fatal flaw of this position roots in the fact that our claims, beliefs, doctrines, practices, customs, all belong to identifiable departments of purposive human endeavor—identifiable domains, disciplines, and the like. For all (or virtually all) human enterprises are at bottom teleological—conducted with some sort of end or objective in view.

Now in this context, the crucial fact is that some claims, beliefs, doctrines, practices, customs, etc. are bound to serve the purposes of their domain better than others. For it is pretty much inevitable that in any goal-oriented enterprise, some alternative ways of proceeding serve better than others with respect to the relevant range of purpose, proving themselves more efficient and effective in point of goal-realization. And in the teleological contexts *thereby* establish themselves as rationally appropriate with respect to the issues. It lies in the nature of the thing that the quintessentially rational thing to do is to give precedence and priority to those alternatives that are more effective with respect to the range of purposes at issue.

Moral absolutism is to be rejected because a moral code is in its details not a matter of one-size-fits-all uniformity.[2] But equally, moral indifferentism is to be rejected because the moral code of one's own community has a valid claim to our own allegiance barring any specific and cogent reasons to the contrary. We thus reject relativism in favor of an objectivism that sees objectivity not as a matter of a "God's eye view" but rather one of the view which we ourselves can see as reasonable insofar as we are being reasonable about the pursuit of our own projects.

11. HOISTED BY ONE'S OWN PETARD?

A subtle and sophisticated objection looms up at this point:

> You say it is inappropriate and ethically obtuse to judge the people of another day and place by the standards of our own. And you say that instead they should be judged by the standards of their own time and place. But then look to our own contemporaries—the people of *our* time and place. As you yourself say, they seem to be given to judging everyone by their standards—past people included. If it indeed is nowadays normal practice to judge the past by current standards, then how can you possibly condemn this practice? After all, you insist that we can expect no more of people than of conformity of the norms of their place and time. In line with your own principles you should therefore see this as only-to-be-expected and refrain from disapproval on this basis.

However this subtle and sophisticated objection is no better than sophistical. It fails to take heed of the distinction, carefully drawn above, between

evaluating a generic mode of acting on the one hand and on the other evaluating a particular agent's actions. For what is being maintained here is that the generic mode of acting ("judging past actions of past agents by present standards") ethically inappropriate and wrong even thought specific acts of these agents is understandable and venial. It is not being maintained that those critics and commentators who engage in criticizing past actions and agents by current standards deserve condemnation. We can and should be liberal towards them and understanding towards their actions. But what we need not and should not do is to approve of the agents actions at issue. Here, as elsewhere, we can—and should—be understanding of the wrongdoer without endorsing the wrongdoing.

12. THE DEMANDS OF RATIONALITY AND JUSTICE

The salient point of these deliberations is that moral evaluation is itself a mode of activity that is inevitably subject to moral standards. Passing moral and ethical judgment on people and their acts is itself an ethically laden step that has direct implications for our own moral standing. For doing this is something that we can do more or less justly, more or less fairly, more or less conscientiously. Thus in engaging in this generic practice we ourselves are doing something that has an ethical dimension. As the Bible tells us, in judging others we lay ourselves open to judgment.

While those doings of the people of others times and places is a matter of what *they* did, our forming evaluative judgments about this is a matter of what *we ourselves* are doing. And as such, this process of evaluative appraisal regarding people's doings and deserts itself has a pervasively ethical coloration. And accordingly, it can—and should—be asked of us that we have proceeded in an ethically appropriate way, proceeding with a view to such salient, here-and-now pertinent, factors of evaluative property as *fairness*, *justice*, *reasonableness*, urbanity, and generosity. The evaluative practice we are concerned with itself falls within the scope of its own concerns. It is something in which the interests of others are engaged in a way that demands procedural appropriateness on our part.

Accordingly, we here have both the right and the obligation to require and achieve an at least adequate level of ethical performance in assessing people's judgmental practices. And the demands of adequacy in this context call heeding just exactly those salient values that have just been enumerated. At this second level remove it is indeed those standards which are—or should be—ours that are determinative. But in this regard,

evaluating the acts and merits of people of other times and places by the current standards of the present (let alone by our own personal standards) is unfair, unreasonable, unjust, ungenerous, and unrealistic.

The business of evaluating others is something that we ourselves conduct on our own account, and thereby is bound to be something that is—or should be—subject to *our* norms. And so what is now at issue calls for applying our standards to what we ourselves are doing here and now. And here the operative norms of justice and fairness that hold for us call for reliance on *their* norms in forming our judgments regarding them.

Our own actions must, clearly, be judged by what our standards are—or ought to be. And here, in specific, our proceedings in evaluating other should be subject to the rule of using *their* standards as basis. It is our own values that do—and should—cry out loud and clear for evaluating those of other places and times by *their* standards rather than *ours*.

Thus in this matter of second-level considerations—of the standards governing *our own* evaluative practice—it is indeed *our* standards that should be operative. And the demand that these standards make upon our evaluative modus operandi is that it shall proceed with reference to the standards of the subjects of evaluation (rather than those of the evaluating agent). In this regard the prime directive alike of reasonableness and justice is represented by the commandment "By the standards of their day shall ye judge them."[3]

But what of our own standards? No doubt they are contextually coordinated to our own situation. But does that render them "purely subjective"? This important issue needs closer scrutiny.

Chapter 2

ON THE IMPORT AND RATIONALE OF VALUE ATTRIBUTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Are our human values subjective and lie entirely "in the eyes of the beholder"? Actually, there are good reasons for thinking that this is not in fact the case. And to see why this is so one does best to begin a look at the idea of what valuation is all about.

This discussion will address the issue of value objectivity with reference specifically to the evaluation of *states of affairs* (actual or possible). The evaluation of objects or features of objects can then be encompassed derivatively within this framework via the evaluation of the state of affairs at issue with the existence of such objects or of their having those features that are under consideration.

States of affairs—be they actual or merely possible—have properties, as, for example, those of including or excluding certain others, of involving certain objects or types of objects (elephants, for example), of being rare or commonplace, recent or historic, etc. Some of these properties are dispositional—as something's being metallic implies its conductivity. And some are additionally relational—inherent in dispositions to evoke a certain sort of response in a certain sort of interagent. Just this will be the case with such properties as those of being pleasing to people or repugnant or dangerous.

The evaluation of states of affairs automatically encompasses that of objects as well. For its being involved in a certain state of affairs is a (relational) property both of the item at issue and of that state at large. For example, M. L. King's assassination is a state of affairs in which both certain properties of Dr. King (viz., his mortality) and certain properties of the circumstances of the shooting-as-a-whole (viz., its occurrence on April 4, 1968) are alike involucrated.

2. TERTIARY PROPERTIES

Even as physical interactions with material objects evoke sensory responses in people, so mental contemplation of states of affairs can and generally do invoke their dispositional features of evoking certain responses in people. For it is a dispositional feature of states of affairs to elicit a certain response in all duly circumstanced individuals of a certain species. And this dispositional property of a state of affairs is as reaction in all organisms constituted in a certain way "objective" a feature of it as any other can possibly be.

Accordingly, it transpires that even as

> *Actualities* (actually existing states of affairs) can and do have the dispositional property of evoking a certain sort of response in their *perception or observation* by a normally constituted human organisms. (These are the *secondary* properties of the observed states of affairs.)

so also do

> *Possibilities* (possibly existing states of affairs—actual ones included) can and do have the dispositional property of evoking a certain sort of response in their *conception or contemplation* by normally constituted and suitably informed rational (and not necessarily human) organisms. (These are the *tertiary* properties of the contemplated state of affairs. And of course actual states of affairs can have such tertiary properties as well.)

Thus, for example, a person's "(physical) similarity to Napoleon" is undoubtedly a property of his. Yet this property represents neither a primary quality nor a sensory disposition but rather a tertiary property. Or again, consider the ink-configuration &. Its property of representing the conjunctive *and* is certainly not something discernible by observation alone—apparent as such to a perceptive Babylonian. Nevertheless it too is a tertiary property.

Secondary qualities are features that any physiologically normal person can *observe*. Tertiary properties, by contrast, are features that only a suitably disposed *thinker* can recognize. There is nothing *mysterious* about them, they are just something conceptually different from and more

complex than secondary properties. An object's secondary properties pivot on its dispositions to evoke characteristic *affective* responses in the suitably responsive senses. Analogously, a state of affairs' tertiary properties pivot on dispositions to evoke characteristic *reflective* responses in the suitably prepared mind. When a Greek vase is (truly) said to be "a typical second century BC Cretan amphora," it is undoubtedly the case that an empirical property of some sort is ascribed to it. But that property is clearly neither primary nor yet secondary in the classical sense of that distinction, which was nowise designed to capture issues relating to features whose nature is dispositional, relational, context-bound, and attributively inferential.

The dispositional status of secondary properties loosens their connection with the actual responses of actual observers: the issue is merely that *if* there were observers and *if* their observations were properly constituted, then what sort of response would the item evoke? And similarly with tertiary properties, where the issue is if these observers were duly apprised and if their evaluative endorsements were properly constituted, then what sort of response would the item evoke? The dispositional properties at issue thus relate to the item's response-evoking capacities, and do not simply "lie in the eye of the beholder."

3. VALUES AS TERTIARY PROPERTIES

The tertiary properties of a state of affairs can certainly be

> *Cognitive*: in involving the realization of descriptive facts. (For example, the state of affairs at issue in the Battle of Waterloo will evoke in any morally constituted contemplator the realization that the French side lost.)

However, tertiary properties can also prove to be

> *Evaluative*: in evoking the realization of pro- or con-evaluations. (For example, the state of affairs at issue with an unprovoked act of pointless violence or destruction will evoke in any normally constituted contemplator a negative or con-reaction.)

The fact that *states of affairs* can possess various (tertiary) normative or value properties which, albeit dispositional, are nevertheless objective, means that objects can have such properties as well. Thus, for example, if

(or, rather, *since*) the state of affairs of a musical piece's being harmonious indeed has (say) the tertiary property of being pleasing to people, then this property can (by courtesy) be said to characterize that musical piece as well. And if the state of affairs of Smith's boorishness has the tendency property of being offensive, then Smith's boorishness can (by courtesy) be held to be offensive as well.

Value thus lies in the object, and not just in the response to it; it is an inherent feature *of an object* that it manifests in certain transactions in which it is "evoked" in appropriately endowed intelligent beings.[4]

Value features are in effect tertiary properties of their bearers. Thus the "beauty" of a vase is something which, unlike its shape, is not going to be detectable by bare straightforward observation. Like its being "a typical product of its era" the validation of its attribution is going to require a great deal of peripheral information and principled reflection. For the ascription of a value to any thing or situation involves an implicit claim about how this item would figure in the reflective thought of an intelligent, unbiassed mind that adequately reflected on its nature and ramifications.

While value-contentions bring persons and their reactions onto the stage of consideration, evaluations are clearly not themselves secondary properties that turn on sensory responses. For tertiary properties carry us into a new, mind-correlative realism. We ascribe secondary properties on essentially causal grounds, but tertiary properties on essentially judgmental ones. Here thought is pivotal and reasons come into it. And while secondary properties are specifically linked to the make-up of our human *sensibility* (our sense-organs), nothing inherently species-bound is involved in the *reflectivity* at issue with tertiary properties.

The tertiary properties of a state of affairs or object are "supervenient" upon its factual nature and descriptive context—encompassing its descriptive make up and its descriptive embedding in the wider setting in which it figures. No doubt, if an item's primary and secondary qualities were different, its tertiary qualities would differ as well. But this supervenience proceeds in a way in which evaluative considerations are also involved. Our concrete evaluations are—when appropriate—indeed rationally constrained by the underlying facts, but constrained in ways that involve the mediating operation of value-principles. (The beauty of a vase indeed follows from its descriptive makeup but the derivation at issue is an enthymeme in which general principles of evaluation are deeply implicated.)

As the present approach sees it, evaluation and description are connected by the following condition:

- That if two items are descriptively the same in factual regards, (as regards both their descriptively intrinsic and their relational features) then they are also of like evaluative condition. And, by contraposition, this further means that if two items differ in value, then they will also exhibit a difference in the some factual/descriptive regard.

The thesis is often characterized as a matter of value-on-fact *supervenience*, a conception initially invoked by R. M. Hare:

> Let us take that characteristic of "good" which has been called its supervenience. Suppose that we say "St. Francis was a good man." It is *logically impossible* to say this and to maintain at the same time there might have been another man placed exactly in the same circumstances as St. Francis, and who behaved in exactly the same way but who differed from St. Francis in this respect only, that he was not a good man.[5]

But of course the "logical impossibility" at issue is not a matter of *pure* logic but rather a matter of those evaluative principles built into the use of evaluative terms like the ethical epithet "good man." The crucial role of such meaning-expository principles governing the use of value terms means that the "supervenient" dependency of evaluating on the "natural facts" is totally compatible with a rejection of a value naturalism that sees evaluative as *derivable* from matters of pure fact alone. Facts do indeed ground values, but do so only through the intermediation of evaluative principles.

However supervenience in the previously specified manner is not quite good enough. After all, if we operated a strange sort of value egalitarianism that saw everything as equi-valuable, then the preceding principle would apply flat-out. For a plausible mode of value-on-fact supervenience in a larger, more satisfactory sense something more is required.

However, there is another no less critical relationship between factual description and normative evaluation:

- That if two items differ *sufficiently* in factual regards, then they will also differ in the evaluative condition.

This principle (which does not follow from the preceding) to the effect that if the facts about an item were sufficiently different then the value situation

too would be altered is also something essential because without it an item's evaluative condition would obtain irrespectively of its what the descriptive facts about it are, which is absurd. After all, any evaluation can be destabilized by altering matters in the direction of "too much of a good thing"—or, alas, by effecting a plunge from bad to yet worse. All this too is a matter of value-on-fact supervenience in an enlarged sense of the term.

G. E. Moore did not serve the interests of philosophical clarity at all well in adopting the contrast terms "*natural/non-natural*" to characterize a distinction for which, on his own principles, the less question-begging contrasts *sensory/non-sensory* or *perceptual/non-perceptual* would have been far more suitable.[6] For, in the final analysis, all that Moore means by calling the value characteristics of things "non-natural" is that they do not represent *observationally* discernible features of their putative bearers, that they are, in their nature, not sensible. (However to call them "supersensible" would introduce the wrong connotations here—what has "higher" or "lower" to do with it?)

To characterize the evaluative features of things as non-natural—as Moore unfortunately did—strongly suggests that something rather strange and mysterious is going on—that the purported condition of things is somehow extra—or super-natural. And invoking this mystery invites the response that just as we have inner and outer sources to observe the natural properties of things, occurrences, or situations (the taste of an apple or the painfulness of a wound), so there is some special sense-analogous faculty to determine their value status, a mysterious value insight or "intuition" to perceive their evaluative aspects. Forgetting the good Kantian point that evaluation is a matter of judgment on the basis of principles, much of Anglo-American moral theory followed Moorean inspirations down the primrose path of a value-insight empiricism that looked to some sort of perceptual or quasi-perceptual access to value, thereby stumbling once more into the blind alley of the older British theorists of moral sense or sensibility. This approach embarked philosophers on the vain quest for a value sensibility—with all of its inherent insolubilia, including the prospect of evaluative color blindness and the intractable problem of how value perception (of any sort) can *justify* rather than merely *explain* evaluations.

The fundamental contrast, of course, should simply be that between what can be observed or inferred from purely observational data and that which cannot. The value of an item is no more perception-accessible than is the ownership of a piece of property. But that of course does not make it something mysterious and "non-natural"—the special object of a peculiar

detection-faculty, a value intuition. The crucial fact is that value is not sense-perceptible but mind-judgmental: something that cannot be determined solely by observation of some sort but requires reflective thought duly sustained by background information and suitably equipped with an awareness of principles.

4. VALUE AS BENEFICIARY COORDINATED?

To see value in this way as being a tertiary property—one that involves a disposition to evoke a pro- or con-reaction in the thought of an intelligent agent when contemplating what is at issue—forges a conceptual link between the possession value and the proceedings of reactive evaluators. Against such a view, the Australian philosophers Richard and Valerie Routley have proposed to demonstrate the existence of intrinsic value wholly without reference to evaluations by means of a thought experiment, which runs essentially as follows:

> Let it be supposed that the last living person has control of a Doomsday Device that would destroy all living things and ecosystems that would otherwise survive. And as a last living act this individual pushes the button. Surely the world would be worse off—evaluatively inferior—after this horrible deed is done than it would otherwise be. But yet despite our overmastering tendency to say this, no evaluator will (by hypothesis) be involved. Surely, then, those creatures and ecosystems have an intrinsic value independently of the presence of our appreciative evaluator. Value can exist independently of any evaluators.[7]

However, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, this plausible-looking argumentation is deeply defective.

Granted, there are no people in the story who can evaluatively react to that act of destruction. But that of course does not mean that human evaluators are eliminated—that in the situation under consideration, any and all evaluators are absent from the scene. For while there are indeed no evaluators IN the story, there yet remain upon the scene those who—like ourselves—are evaluators OF the story. And to approve or allow to let that vandalism go unregretted and unreproached would do irreparable harm to OUR character and OUR moral standing. The meta-story of an evaluator who countenances such a thing is the story of someone who is indeed ad-

versely affected in point of his/her moral character. (What we have here is something of a double-effect variant of Plato's Ring of Gyges.)

When we TELL a story, then the limits and frame of the story are set simply by what transpires within it, and its cast of characters is set within that frame. But when we USE a story to make a point we enlarge that frame and now will ourselves figure within its duly enlarged range. The otherwise absent so-called "fourth wall" is now erected on the stage of our narrative drama. For now what is being said is not story internal ("The story has it that such-and-such"), but rather we now speak on our own account ("We take the story to mean that something or other holds."). The moment the Routleys draw lessons from their story, they themselves figure in the now enlarged framework of consideration. Prospero's addressing the audience is as much a part of the play as are his opening lines—he does not step outside the frame but only faces another part of it--one that is almost always left unconsidered. And so, while we indeed are not figures within the Routley's story as it stands, nevertheless when we are invited to step back from the story to consider its larger meaning and an appeal is made to our normative stance with regard to it, then this introduces a new, enlarged frame that embraces us as well.

And so, even when we think existing humans (rational agents) out of our stories and find that evaluative relations still apply we do not thereby show that values are not rational-agent correlative. For it is still WE OURSELVES who are doing the appraisals and who transact that evaluative business on our own account.

Think of the inverse proceeding, viz., that of thinking additional sorts of rational agents (intelligent aliens, say) into our story. And let us hypothesize a society of such agents who systemically treat their fellows with a total disregard for their interests in point of welfare and well being. These beings are, of course, immoral and evil. But this is not (or may well not be) a judgment that THEY are involved in, it is OUR judgment. We are the ones who here transact that evaluative business on our own account. So clearly there is a symmetry here. Just as it is that when we think people into a story and find that our values are decisive for its evaluation in point of moral issues, so it is that when we think people out of a story and find that values continue to be applicable, it is in fact our values that are operative.

To be sure someone might object as follows:

> Granted, when that thought experiment asks us to consider our ethical responses to learning that the last man will or will not destroy all life we imagine ourselves giving the act of destruction a thumbs up and feel repugnance—not only towards the sort of person who would commit the deed, but to the sort of person who would approve them. But while from "p is good" it is indeed reasonable to infer that "For one to recognize that 'p is good' is good" the fact remains they are different judgments, and one who makes the first need not be making the second. Otherwise a regress develops, and anyone who makes a single ethical judgment makes an infinite number of them.

But this objection hits wide of the mark. Thus consider the Tarskiesque equivalence:

> *p* iff *T*(*p*)—that is: it is true that *p*.

The affirmation or judgment that *p* automatically stands correlative with the implicit assertion or judgment that it is true that *p*. Indeed all of the propositions

> *p*, *T*(*p*), *T*(*T*(*p*)), etc.

are equivalent (interdeducible and informatively identical). From the standpoint of information conveyed, one does not offer more than another. And in endorsing any of these propositions one stands committed to endorsing the rest. But of course the issue here is one of systemic interrelationship. Making any of these assertions is not equivalent to making the rest in a PERFORMATORY sense, but only in an informative (communicative) sense. In endorsing any of these we ipso facto endorse the rest. But the coordination is systemic, and certainly not presuppositional. Making or endorsing the claim that p does not involve FIRST making or endorsing the claim that *T*(*p*). There is no logical priority or presupposition here, but only systemic correlation. No vicious regress looms. And just the same general story holds for the pairing of "*P* is good" with "It is fitting/good to recognize that *P* is good"—no vicious regress but just systemic coordination.

To reemphasize: If it is indeed the case that—as maintained above—values are tertiary properties, then it must be the case that they are concep-

tually geared to the reactions of an act at least hypothetically invoked evaluators. But this does not transpire as to make a vicious regress.[8]

Yet does coordination of value with evaluators not mean that values are person-coordinately subjective? By no means.

5. PARAMOUNT CONSEQUENCES OF SEEING VALUES AS TERTIARY DISPOSITIONS

When values are regarded as tertiary properties of states of affairs and objects along the lines proposed above, they immediately ensue a whole list of important features of value. The following instances are paramount here:

(A) *Value as Nonsubjective*

The question of whether or not (and if so to what extent) a state of affairs has value does not ask whether you or I or X values it: it is not a question about the personal, idiosyncratic, subjective stance of particular individuals. Rather what it asks—impersonally, generally, and objectively is whether people *should* value it—that is whether, given the realities of the human situation, ideally reasonable and conscientious people are well advised to value it. The issue at bottom is whether in prizing and pursuing the condition at issue people are contributing towards more effectively serving their real interests. The issue is not how people do react but how they should react, how their best and deepest interests are most effectively served. The matter is emphatically not one that hinges on the idiosyncratic views and personal preferences of particular individuals.

And this immediately settles some key issues.

Does value lie in the eyes of the beholder? Does having value require being valued? By no means! A harmonious ecosystem has value not because its participants appreciate this—after all, all of them might function below the threshold of consciousness—but because its is the sort of thing that *deserves* being prized so that rational evaluators will indeed prize it. Nor do we who contemplate the value of such an arrangement create its value through the act of valuing it. It has value not because it is valued but because it deserves to be valued—because rational beings who contemplate it and get to do so with appropriation and prioritive response. Such appreciators do not *create* that value but rather *appreciate* it. Subjectivity does not come into it. The value of states of affairs is not a matter of the

actual reactions of *particular* evaluators but of the *appropriate* (i.e., normal and natural) reactions of *natural kinds* of evaluators.

(B) *Value as Factual*

Something has value for us humans if its pursuit and realization conduces to our capacity to thrive and flourish as the sorts of creatures we are—that is, when it facilitates our needs and appropriate wants. For example, the states of affairs ranked in meeting our need for food, shelter, clothing, friends, etc. have this character and thereby reflect legitimate values. And it is simply a matter of fact that these circumstances obtain.

(C) *Values as Attributive*

It is tautologous that value assumptions are evaluative and normative. But they are also attributive: that is, they address features not of the attributer, as the source of attribution but of the object as the target of attribution. They are thus also "objective" in the sense of imprinting features of the objects involved—the items or states of affairs at issue. They are object characterizing precisely because if various of the relevant features of the objects at issue were different, then they would differ as well. They supervene (as the current jargon has it) upon the feature-constitution of the objects at issue. If those items were sufficiently different then the value situation too would change.

(D) *Values as Relational and Mind-Invoking*

Value-attributions are relational: they assert a linkage between the objects at issue and other elements in the environing manifold of things. Just as color ascriptions assert a relationship between an object and its viewers (actual and potential) so value ascriptions assert a relationship between an object or state of affairs and those who do (or might) contemplate it. And seeing that contemplation brings much upon the state of consideration it transpires that that value is mind-invoking. However, minds are needed not for the existence of values but for their conceptualization. For we do not have

- To have value is to be appreciated (or the reverse)

but rather

- To have value is to be such as to *deserve* being appreciated or the reverse.

That is, the *concept* of being prized—or, rather, deserving to be—prized in its conception by a (thus necessarily) mind-endowed being is an indispensable part of the vary conception of value.

(E) *Value as Dispositional*

Does the three that falls unobserved in the forest make a sound? Are the poppies that bloom unobserved in the field beautiful? The answer in both cases is: Yes of course. A noise need not be heard to qualify as such, not need a beautiful object be appreciated. Sounds exist where they *can be* heard (though they need not be). And the same with values. They too exist where they *can be* appreciated, even when this is not actually in process of happening.

Of course the dispositional character of nature is clearly exhibited in the preceding exposition of the status of value as a tertiary disposition.

(G) *Values as Non-anthropocentric*

Values—as the preceding discussion has indicated—inhere in *features of states of affairs whose contemplation evokes a positive or negative (pro or con) reaction in their contemplation by all (normal) organisms of a particular species of rational being.*

This of course means that there *can* be specifically human value (aromatic pleasantness, for example, or gastronomic healthfulness) that are specifically bard up with certain features of the human condition (our ability to smell, for example, or our capacity to taste food). But of course not *all* values need be of their highly species-specific sort—being nourishing (for example) in contrast with being tasty is a far more extensive value, and such values as informativeness or (cognitive) harmoniousness will presumably hold good for rational beings at large—alien intelligences presumably included. Indeed one salient contention of moral philosophers since the days of Kant (at least) is that specifically *moral* values (such as candor or honesty or generosity) hold good for rational intelligences at large.

Accordingly, it would surely be unduly parochial and narrow-minded to maintain that values are anthropocentric and must be seen as geared to specifically human interests and concerns.

6. VALUES AND REASON

In taking values to represent tertiary properties it emerges that values are an instrumentality of reason. They are inextricably bound up with the question of good reasons for preferring one state of affairs to another. For it is one sort of thing to say the only rational beings can *have values* and something very different to say that only rational beings can have value. Thus consider a realm devoid of minds—of intelligent beings. This sort of manifold can certainly exhibit value—aesthetic value such as elegance, for example, or even such cognitive values as orders in harmony. And this can transpire in the absence of minds from the immediate scene. For minds are not encompassed in value any more than they are in truth. Rather, they are encompassed in the very idea of being valued. The existence of value does not require the existence of minds; but the *conception* of value invokes the conception of minds via the fact that having value is correlative with *deserving* to evoke a pro- or con-reaction in contemplating minds. But this sort of mind-involvement is *conceptual* not *ontological*.[9]

7. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF VALUE

Given that values are objective features of states of affairs (actual or possible) how do we determine them? To clarify what is at issue here let us consider what has become known among philosophers as "Mill's Fallacy."

> John Stuart Mill argued the desirability of happiness as follows: The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself [viz. happiness] were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. (*Utilitarianism*, Chapter IV.)

It is commonly objected against this reasoning that *visible* = "capable of being seen" and *audible* = "capable of being heard", but *desirable* does not come to "*capable* of being desired" but rather "*worthy* of being desired." But Mill is not guilty of a confusion here. The linkage he (presumably) has in mind is not that being desired *constitutes* desirability through a meaning-relationship of some sort, but that it *evidentiates* desirability: that a good—and perhaps even the best—evidential ground we can secure to show that something is desirable is that people desire it. His reasoning is enthymematic:

- People universally seek happiness

- People are sensible enough not to be systematically deluded: What all or most of them desire is something that (almost certainly) worthy of being desired

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Therefore: Happiness is worthy of being desired.

The reasoning here is indeed from fact to value alright, but only via an enthymematic premiss that bridges the fact/value divide. For accordingly, any such inferential transition (along the lines endorsed by J. S. Mill) from what people factually desire to what qualifies as normatively desirable (i.e., *deserving* of being desired) hinges crucially on the availability of a (tacit) premiss to the general effect: *Whatever people* (*commonly, generally, ordinarily*) *desire* (*prefer, prize*) *is worthy of being desired* (*preferred, prized*. But this enthymematic premiss itself clearly has an evaluative status that prevents the approach at issue from achieving any *reductive* ends. To achieve cogency, the move from people's preferences or desires to something's being of value must always be mediated by some evaluative supplementation.

The crux of Mill's "Fallacy" lies in its (supposedly) purporting to be an explanation of what it means to say that something has value. And this *definitional* task is clearly something for which Mill's formula is very ill suited. But *criteriology*—which surely is what he had in view—is something else again. One of the most cogent premisses of evidence we can have of the existence of a human value—for substantiating the claim that something deserves to be valued by people—is the actual circumstance that people-in-general do ordinarily and normally value it.

After all, nature has implanted us humans in the world's scheme of things as rational beings—as objects who occasionally are and generally ought to be rational in what they thing and do. After all, values are our guide to matter of decision and action, and we use this guidance in our endeavors to satisfy our desires and above all our needs. On this basis, the very fact of the pervasiveness and endurance of values testifies to their efficacy and thereby to their deserving to be heeded. It is essentially this factor of the development and transmission of certain values through the process of *cultural* evolution—via a *rational* selection of that which is efficient and effective—that comes to the fore here. The very fact that certain values are pervasive and enduring serves to constitute an evidential rationale for their appropriateness and betokens the objectivity of value and establishes appropriate valuation a something that does not merely lie "in the eyes of the beholder." And so specifically, states of affairs are appropriately valued by people when their subject does (or would) tend dispositionally towards a positive response that is rationally warranted through the consideration that its obtaining does (or would) prove effective in meeting some need or desire that is inherent in the situation of our species.

Chapter 3

NOMIC HIERARCHIES AND PROBLEMS OF RELATIVISM

1. NOMIC HIERARCHIES

Though values play an important role in our affairs, they are certainly not created equal. Values too can be enlisted, and indeed stand in relationships that render this inevitable.

The idea of a nomic hierarchy—a hierarchy of principles and values—is a virtually indispensable instrument of philosophical reflection. Such a "cultivation hierarchy" (as one may call it) characterizes any purposively oriented human endeavor. It takes the generic format:

— determinate "finalities": the characterizing aims of the enterprise

— governing principles that define the specific bearing of these broad orientations

— guiding norms, criteria, and standards delineating the basic values and desiderata at work in implementing policies

— methods of procedure (operating rules)

— specific rulings

The top-level purpose is itself "ultimate" for its own domain: it defines and specifies what is at issue in the venture under consideration, the concerns that make it the sort of project it is (be it science or horticulture). And the successive descending levels each address the matter of implementing the previously fixed aims and objectives.

Justification at each successively more subordinate level is thus purposive and turns on questions of efficiency and effectiveness in serving the needs of the next, superordinated higher level. There is a step-by-step descent from finalities (the characteristic aims inherent in the very definition

of valid, need-meeting enterprises) through norms to rules and eventually to specific rulings. And it should be stressed that all of these stages of rationale development appertain equally to the realms of rational belief, action, and evaluation. The same story holds for any inherently goal-oriented human project—medicine or dietetics or science or whatever. In every case, such a hierarchical series descends from the overarching defining objective of the enterprise at issue down to the specific resolutions of concrete cases. The same structure of practical reasoning by subordination under higher-level norms obtains throughout.

Take medicine for example. The cultivation hierarchy at issue here runs along the following lines:

1. *Finalities:* Aims of the enterprise. "Maintaining health."

2. *Governing Principles:* "Curing illness and disease," "restoring and maintaining normal bodily functioning," "removing painful symptoms." (Note that if *these* things are not at issue, then *medicine* is not at issue. An enterprise not concerned with any of these, whatever it may be, is not medicine.)

3. *Governing norms, standards, and criteria*: "How is one to assess 'health'?" "How is one to construe a satisfactory 'normality'?" "How is one to identify a 'symptom'?" "Just what constitutes an 'illness'?" (Note that for the Greeks, unlike ourselves, the idea of an illness without subject-experienced symptoms was scarcely conceivable. At this level there is already some room for variation.)

4. *Rules of procedure*: the *modus operandi* of medical practices—surgery or chiropractic treatment, drugs or psychotherapy, and the like. (These of course differ drastically from age to age and culture to culture.)

5. *Rationally warranted rulings*: the particular interventions, prescriptions, and medical measures adopted in particular cases. ("Take two aspirin and get some rest.")

The nomic hierarchy of this sort leads from a fixed "top level" characterizing aim, health, through governing norms and values (like "well-nourished," "well-rested," "mentally balanced") to particular rules ("Eat

and drink adequately!", "Get enough rest"; etc.). Finally, we move via moderating injunctions ("Three meals a day") down to the particular decisions and rulings of medical practice (particular diet-plans or prescriptions). The top levels of such a normative hierarchy are "ultimate"—they define and specify what is at issue in the venture under consideration in its nature and implications. Here we deal with such universals.

At the top level there is a fixity and uniformity based in conceptual constraints inherent in the very definition of the nature of the enterprise. But, uniformity is achieved here at the price of an abstractness and generality that endows the principles at issue with a conditional or hypothetical character. As we move downwards towards the level of particular cases, the situation is increasingly one of concrete detail, and this detail brings increasing scope for variation in its wake. Thus, while the top level is itself absolute and constant, there is "slack" at each step down the ladder, leaving (appropriate) room for an increasingly large element of variability and differentiation. At each successive step in the process of subordination there is some degree of under-determination—scope for diversity and some degree of contextual variability. (In the cognitive case, variability arises with such issues as: What sorts of rules best implement the demands for cogent deductive and inductive reasoning? What sorts of solutions do schematic rules like "Adapt theories to the data as well as possible" lead to?) As we move down this hierarchic ladder there emerges an increasing looseness of fit that provides for the differential adaptation of general principles to the specific characteristics of particular settings and circumstances.

In the medical case, for example, we get such norms as: maintaining health, and more specifically maintaining health through nourishment (eating), and more specifically getting nourishment by eating healthy foods that one also happens to like. Observe, however, that all of these more specific implementation formula are also *universally* appropriate modes of operation: Doing the things involved is rational for *everybody*. But, this universality becomes increasingly qualified in its conditions of application when one proceeds down the ladder by appropriate steps.[10] (Clearly, not everyone happens to like meat in general or steak in particular.) And so, there is much room for variation in the concrete implementation of universals. As regards (2), different things are nourishing for different people, given their particular biomedical make-up. And as regards (3) it is clear that different people like different things.

How a principle like "Do not drive in a way that needlessly endangers the lives of others" gets implemented will depend on a great many factors of situational variation (neither conditions, visibility conditions, the expectations of others as defined by local speed limits, and on and on). As one moves through the lower levels of such a hierarchy, there is a "slack" that leaves room for increasing variability and dissensus. Specific rules and guidelines will vary with situations and circumstances—different experiential contexts. "Maintaining an alert mind" is in *everyone's* medical interest, but "Getting eight hours regular sleep" is only appropriate for some.

For a particular normative resolution to qualify as rationally valid, the entire ascending chain of subordination that links it to those topmost determinative finalities must thus be appropriately validated. The whole rationale developed in terms of such a cultivation hierarchy must be cogent "all the way up" for the ruling itself to be rationally cogent. If there is not a filiation of continuity—if a particular measure is not part of a long story that leads from our concrete choices all the way up to that fixed and stable top level of the principles that define "the aims of the (in the present case *medical*) enterprise"—then it is really not a genuine *medical* measure that is in question. Throughout, justification of one's proceedings at lower levels involves an appeal to the higher. But the highest level is final in its defining role for the overall enterprise at issue. (After all, medicine—or cognition—is a definite sort of enterprise, different in its teleological nature from ventures like medicine or butterfly collecting.)

The situation in medicine as we have depicted it here is mirrored in a very different areas as well. Take that of warfare. Here too we have a nomically geared cultivation hierarchy—one which, in this case, has the following format:

- ultimate aims: bending a group's enigmas to its will by the use of fire.
- strategic principles
- tactical rules (The guiding precepts of Jomini and Clausewitz vs. tactical manuals)
- operating procedures ("regulations," standard practices)
- specific orders and directions

Increasing generality range of validity, abstractedness, and stability as we move upwards."

Such a normative hierarchy of rationale-furnishing levels always plays a crucial role in providing for the rational legitimation of what we do. At its pinnacle there is some rationally valid (appropriately interest-serving) desideratum like health (or rationality itself) to furnish the "ultimate" pivot point, but moving down the line we encounter the increasingly more concrete factors of rationalization, until ultimately we arrive at specific determinations about concrete items. Here, there is increasing room for context-supplied development, variation, and dissensus.

In such an "implementation hierarchy" we thus descend from what is abstractly and fixedly universal to what is concrete and variable. Level 2 is contained in Level 1 simply be way of exfoliative "explication." But as we move downwards past Level 3 to the implementing specifications of Level 4, there is—increasingly—a looseness or "slack" that makes room for the specific and variable ways of different groups for implementing the particular higher-level objective at issue.

2. THE CASE OF RATIONALITY

Let us now turn to the idea of rationality. How can the absolutistic universality of the defining principles of rationality—themselves rooted in the monolithic uniformity of "what rationality is"—possibly be reconciled with the pluralistic diversity of appropriate answers to the question: "What is it rational to do?" The answer lies in the fact that various intermediate levels, or strata, of consideration separate these

Display 1

STRATIFICATION LEVELS OF PRINCIPLES OF RATIONALITY

1. *Defining aims of rationality*. The basic principles that determine the nature of the enterprise and specify what rationality is all about. (For cognitive rationality, for example, the project at issue turns on the pursuit of truth and the achievement of correct answers to our questions: "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.")

2. *Basic principles.* Ruling principles provide our criteria for assessing the acceptability and adequacy of rational norms and standards of rational procedure.

3. *Governing norms and standards of rationality*. Standards for appraising the "rules of the game" governing the rational transaction of affairs. (For cognitive rationality these norms are afforded by desiderata such as coherence, consistency, simplicity, and the like.) These norms provide our criteria for assessing the acceptability and adequacy of our rules of rational procedure.

4. *Rules of rational procedure*. Rules for the rational resolution of choices. (In the cognitive case, rules like *modus ponens* in deductive inference or trend extrapolation in inductive inference.) These rules constitute our criteria for assessing the rational acceptability and adequacy of particular resolutions.

5. *Rationally warranted rulings*. Resolutions with respect to particular issues arising in particular concrete cases, such as: "Do (or accept) *X* in the existing circumstances."

abstract and uniform "basic principles of rationality" from concrete resolutions about what it is rational to do in the variegated plurality of particular circumstances and conditions that prevail in the world. The tabulation of Display 1 depicts this descending hierarchy of principles, norms and standards, rules and (finally) rulings, which comprises the structure of rationale development. There is a distinctive hierarchical continuum of levels throughout. At the top of the hierarchy, the defining principles of rationality specify the characterizing aims of the enterprise. They explicate what is at issue: the giving of good reasons for what we do, the provision of a reasonable account, the telling of a sensible story (*lógon didónai, rationem*

reddere). The characteristic mission of rationality is that of providing an account of our dealings, of committing ourselves in the context of our affairs to "making sense," of rendering our dealings intelligible, of conducting our affairs intelligently. At the next level down, the governing norms and standards are our yardsticks of rational procedure: basic principles of logic, canons of inductive reasoning, standards of evidence, and the like, which already admit of some variation. Then, descending further, we encounter the "rules of the game" that specify the procedures through which we implement ends and objectives of the enterprise in the concrete context of particular cases. Finally, at the bottom level, come the specific resolutions for particular cases achieved through the subsumption of concrete cases under the rules. (It is clearly these last that vary most of all.)

Accordingly, in being rational, we pursue universal desiderata in person-differential ways—ways that we have good reason to deem effective in the peculiar conditions of our particular case. Not all of us eat what Tom does. But we can, all of us, (i) explain and understand his eating kumquats once we realize that he happens to like them and (responsibly) believes them to be both hunger-removing and healthful, and (ii) agree that the *modus operandi* involved in his case ("eating what one likes and responsibly believes to be nourishing") is one to which we ourselves do (and should) subscribe. Rationality is a matter of pursuing valid (and universally appropriate) desiderata as ends by appropriate means (but means that are *individually* appropriate and adjusted to the circumstances of one's personal situation).[11]

This perspective makes it clear that a uniformitarian absolutism at the top level of "what rationality is"[12] is perfectly consonant with a pluralism and relativism at the ground level of concrete resolutions regarding "what is rational" in particular cases. The ruling principles of rationality never uniquely constrain their more specific implementations their application to concrete circumstances always permits some degree of "slack." At each step along the way we repeat the same basic situation: delimitation, yes; determination, no. Resolutions can, in principle, always be accomplished in distinct yet still appropriate ways. The sought-for reconciliation between the universalistic absoluteness of rationality and the variability and relativity of its particular rulings is thus provided by the consideration that the absolutism of principles operates at the highest level of the hierarchy of rationale development, while there is ever more "slack" and variability as one moves towards the lowest level of concrete determinations. The variability and relativity of good reasons at the level of our actual operations

can indeed be reconciled with the absolutism of rationality itself by taking a hierarchical view of the process through which the absolutistic conception of ideal rationality is brought to bear on the resolution of concrete cases and particular situations.[13]

3. THE CASE OF MORALITY

Morality is also a purposive human project—one whose cohesive unity as such resides in its functional objective of molding the behavior of people through a care for one anothers interests. Accordingly, we here again have an implementation hierarchy. We once move to deal with a descending sequence of characterizing aims, fundamental principles and values, governing rules, implementing directives, and (finally) particular rulings. (See Display 2.)

Display 2

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION HIERARCHY OF MORALITY

Level 1: *Characterizing Aims of the Enterprise*

- To support the best interests of people and to avoid injuring them.

Level 2: *Basic Principles (Controlling Values)*

- Do not cause people needless pain (GENTLENESS)
- Do not endanger people's lives or their well being unnecessarily (CARE FOR SAFETY)
- Honor your genuine commitments to people; in dealing with people give them their just due (PROBITY)
- Help others when you reasonably can (GENEROSITY)
- Don't take improper advantage of others(FAIRNESS)

Level 3: *Operating Rules*

- Don't hurt people unnecessarily
- Don't lie; don't say what you believe not to be so
- Don't cheat

Level 4: *Operating Directives*

- Be candid when replying to appropriate questions
- Do not play with unfair dice
- Where possible use anesthetics when operating on people

Level 5: *Concrete Rulings*

- Return the money you borrowed from Smith
- Don't pollute this river, dispose of your sewage elsewhere
- Don't let these children play with those matches

At the topmost level we have the defining aims and objectives of the moral enterprise as such by specifying what morality is all about—namely acting with a view to safeguarding the valid interests of others. These characterizing aims of morality represent the overarching "defining objectives" that delineate the project as such. They explicate what is at issue when it is with *morality*—rather than, say, basket weaving—that we propose to concern ourselves. In spelling out the fundamental idea of what morality is all about, these top-level norms provide the ultimate reference points of moral deliberation. And they are unalterably fixed—inherent in the very nature of the subject.

And these fundamental "aims of the enterprise" also fix the basic principles and controlling values that delineate the moral virtues (honesty, trustworthiness, civility, probity, and the rest). Such values define the salient norms that link the abstract characterizing aims to an operational morality of specific governing rules. The norms embodied in these basic principles and values are "universal" and "absolute" features of morality, inherence in the enterprise and serving as parts of what makes morality the thing it is. (Examples: "Do not violate the duly established rights and claims of others." "Do not unjustly deprive others of life, liberty, or opportunity for self-development." "Do not tell self-serving falsehoods." "Do not deliberately aid and abet others in wrongdoing.") Accordingly these high level principles also lie fixedly in the very nature of the subject. At these two topmost levels, then, there is accordingly no room for any "disagreement about morality." Here disagreement betokens misunderstanding: if one does not recognize the fundamental aims, principles, and values that characterize the moral enterprise as such, then one is simply dealing with something else altogether. In any discussion of *morality* these things are fixed givens.

However this situation changes as one moves further down the list and takes additional steps in the descent to concreteness. Thus at the next (third) level we encounter the governing rules and regulations that direct the specifically moral transaction of affairs. Here we have the generalities of the usual and accustomed sort: "Do not lie," "Do not cheat," "Do not steal," etc. At this level we come to the imperatives that guide our deliberations and decisions. Like the Ten Commandments, they set out the controlling do's and don'ts of the moral practice of a community, providing us with general guidance in moral conduct. Already here variability begins to set in. For these rules implement morality's ruling principles at the con-

crete level of recommended practices in a way that admits of adjustment to the changeable circumstances of local conditions. For a generalized moral rule on the order of the injunction

- Do not steal! = Do not take something that properly belongs to another!

is something abstract and schematic. It requires the concrete fleshing out of substantive implementing specifications to tell us what sorts of things make for "proper ownership."

And so the next (fourth) level presents us with the groundrules of procedure or implementing directives that furnish our working guidelines and criteria for the moral resolution of various types of cases. (Example: "Killing is wrong except in cases of self defense or under legal mandate as in war or executions.") At this level of implementing standards and criteria, the variability of local practice comes to the fore, so that there is further room for pluralistic diversification here; we ourselves implement "Do not lie, avoid telling falsehoods," by way of "Say what you believe (to be the case)," but a society of convinced sceptics could not do so. The operating groundrules of level four accordingly incorporate the situation-relative standards and criteria though which the more abstract, higher level rules get their grip on concrete situations. Those general rules themselves are too abstract—too loose or general to be applicable without further directions to give them a purchase on concrete situations. They must be given concrete implementation with reference to local—and thus variable—arrangements.[14]

Finally, at the lowest (fifth) level we came to the particular moral rulings, individual resolutions with respect to the specific issues arising in concrete cases. (Example: "It was wicked of Lady Macbeth to incite her husband to kill the king.") Attunement to the variable additions of concrete contexts is the order of the day here.

The entire hierarchy comes to a head in a ruling imperative ("Support the interests of people!") that stands correlative with an enterprise-determinative value ("the best interests of people"). This over-arching concern does not itself stand subordinate to further moral rules. After all, it is only possible up to a certain point that we can have rules for applying rules and principles for applying principles. The process of validating lower-level considerations in terms of higher-level ones must come to a stop somewhere. And with these implementation hierarchies it is the over-

ending controlling teleology of "the aim of the entire enterprise" that gives at once unity and determinatives to the justificatory venture.

4. MORAL ABSOLUTES AND THE HIERARCHY-INDUCED OBJECTION TO MORAL RELATIVISM

Even as there are many ways to build houses, fuel automobiles, or skin cats, so there are various ways of being moral. But this does explicitly not mean that there is no overarching unity of goals, functions, principles, and values to lend a definitional cohesion to the enterprise. Moral variability is more apparent than real—an absolute uniformity does, and must, prevail at the level of fundamentals. "Act with due heed of the interests of others" is a universal and absolute moral principle whose working out in different contexts will, to be sure, very much depend on just exactly how the interests of people happen to be reciprocally inter-twined. But despite the diversity of the substantive moral codes of different societies, the basic overarching principles of morality are uniform and invariant—inherent in the very idea of what morality is all about. Here too we have a nomic hierarchy whose topmost level is determinative.

Viewed from this perspective it emerges different "moralities" are simply diverse implementations of certain uniform, overarching moral *principles*. There is ample room for situational variation and pluralism in response to the question: "What is the morally appropriate thing to do?" But there is no such room with respect to: "What is morality—and what are the principles at issue here?" The concept of morality and its contents are fixed by the "*questioner's prerogative*" inherent in the principle that it is the inquirer's own conception of the matter that is determinative for what is at issue in his inquiries. In *our deliberations* about moral rights and wrongs it is thus *our conception* of "morality" and its governing principles that is conclusive for what is at issue. When *we* engage in deliberations about morality—be it our own or that of others—it is "morality" *as we understand it* that figures in this discussion.[15] And this circumstance of theoretic fixity engenders a fixity of those project-definitive moral principles.

All modes of morality have important elements in common simply in view of the fact that *morality* is at issue. Since (by hypothesis) they all qualify as "modes of morality," they are bound to encompass such fundamental considerations as the following:

- What people do matters. Some actions are right, others wrong, some acceptable and some not. There is an important difference here.

- This is not just a matter of convention, custom, and the done thing. Violations of moral principles are not just offenses against sensibility but against people's just claims in matters where people's actual well-being is at stake.

- In violating the moral rules we inflict injury on the life, welfare, or otherwise legitimate interests of others—either actually or by way of putting them at unjustifiedly at risk.

Attunement to consideration of this sort is *by definition* essential to any system of "morality," and serves to provide the basis for imperatives like:

- Do not simply ignore other people's rights and claims in your own deliberations!

- Do not inflict needless pain on people!

- Honor the legitimate interests of others!

- Do not take what rightfully belongs to others without their appropriately secured consent!

- Do not wantonly break promises!

- Do not cause someone anguish simply for your own amusement!

In the context of *morality*, principles and rules of this sort are universal and absolute. They are of the very essence of morality; in abandoning them we would withdraw from a discussion of *morality* and would in effect, be changing the subject. What we say might be interesting—and even true—but it would deal with another topic.

"But how can you pivot the issue on 'the very idea of what "morality" is all about'? After all, different people have different ideas about this?" Of course different people think differently about morality, even as they think differently about dogs or automobiles. But that's basically irrelevant.

What is at issue with "morality" as such does not lie with you or with me but with all of us. What is relevantly at issue is how the word is actually used in the community—in the linguistic culture in which our discussion of the issue transpires. It is a matter not of what people think about the topic, but of how they use the terminology that defines it.

Yet how can this fixity of the conception of morality and of the basic principles that are at issue within it—inherent in the monolithic uniformity of "what *morality* is"—be reconciled with the plain fact of a pluralistic diversity of (presumably cogent) answers to the question: "What is it moral to do?" How can such an absolutism of morality's fundamentals coexist with the patent relativity of moral evaluations across different times and cultures?

The answer lies in the fact that several intermediate levels or strata inevitably separate those overarching "basic principles of morality" from any concrete judgments about what it is moral to do.

Overall, then, we have to deal with a chain of subordination-likages that connect a concrete moral judgment—a particular moral act-recommendation or command—with the ultimate defining aim of the moral enterprise. The long and short of it is that any appropriate moral injunction must derive its validity through being an appropriate instantiation or concretization of an overarching principle of universal (unrestricted) validity under which it is subsumed. It must, in short, represent a circumstantially appropriate implementation of the fixities of absolute morality. Thus even as in Roman Catholic theology there is a "hierarchy of truths" which places different teachings of the Church at different levels of doctrinal essentiality or fundamentality, so in the present context there is a comparable hierarchy of imperatival strata that place different imjunctions at different levels of fundamentality in the moral enterprise, with some (the basic principles) as, in this setting, absolute, and others as variable and relative to context and circumstance. Fundamentals are fixed as essential to the domain as such, but agreement on concrete issues is itself something more marginal.

The crucial fact is that one selfsame moral value—fairness, for example—can come into operation very differently in different contexts. In an economy of abundance it may militate for equality of shares, in an economy of scarcity for equality of opportunity. The particular circumstances that characterize a context of operation may importantly condition the way in which a moral value or principle can (appropriately) be applied. We cannot expect to encounter any universal consensus across cultural and

temporal divides: physicians of different eras are (like moralists) bound to differ—and to some extent those of different cultures as well. There is—inevitably—substantial variability among particular groups, each with its own varying ideas conditioned by locally prevailing conditions and circumstances. But the impact of low-level variation is mitigated by the fact that justification at lower levels proceeds throughout with reference to superordinated standards in a way that makes for higher-level uniformity. Uniform high-level principles will have to be implemented differently in different circumstances. Medicine and morality alike are complex projects unified and integrated amidst the welter of changing conditions and circumstances by the determinative predominance of high-level principles.

At the level of basic principles, then, morality is absolute; its strictures at this level hold good for everyone, for all rational agents. And lower-level rules and rulings must—if valid—preserve a "linkage of subsumption" to those highest-level abstractions, a linkage mediated by way of more restrictive modes of implementation. These implementing rules involve contextual relativity—coordination with contingently variable (setting-dependent and era- and culture-variable) circumstances and situations. Thus while moral objectives and basic principles—those top levels of the hierarchy of moral norms—are absolute and universal, "slack" arises as we move further down the ladder, leaving room for (quite appropriate) contextual variability and differentiation. "Do not unjustifiably take the property of another for your own use" is an unquestionably valid principle of absolute morality. But it avails nothing until such time as there are means for determining what is "the property of another" and what constitutes "unjustified taking." "Don't break promises merely for your own convenience" is a universal moral rule, and as such is global and absolute. But what sorts of practices constitute making a valid promise is something that is largely determined through localized social conventions. Local context—variable history, tradition, expectation-defining legal systems, and the like—thus makes for substantial variability at the level of operational rules and codes, of moral practices.

But a linkage of subordination is maintained throughout. The validity of concrete rulings is always a matter of their attuning global (and abstract) prescriptions to local (and concrete) conditions. Without that linkage to the fixed highest-level absolutes, the linkage to morality is severed. For a particular ruling to be a proper moral ruling at all, there must be a suitable moral *rationale* for the action—a pathway of subordination linkages that connects it in a continuous manner all the way up to the characterizing

aims of the moral enterprise. Varying practices and codes of procedure only possess moral validity insofar as they are implementations of a fixed and determinate set of moral principles. Moral validity must always root in a moral universality that is constrained by a *conceptual* fixity.

From the moral point of view, the *empirical* search for "cultural invariants" as pursued by some ethnologists is thus entirely beside the point.[16] When such investigations embark on a cross-cultural quest for "moral universals" or "universal values" amidst the variation of social customs, they are engaged in a search which, however interesting and instructive in its own way, has nothing whatever to do with the sort of normative universality at issue with morality as such. Moral universality is not a matter of cross-cultural commonality but of a *conceptually* constrained uniformity. (It would be just as pointless to investigate whether another culture's forks have tynes.) The variability of *mores* makes only a limited impact upon the uniformitarian absolutism of *morals*.

5. AGAINST MORAL RELATIVISM

Morality's characteristic universality is thus inevitably mediated through factors that are variable, conventional, and culturally relative. The rules of hospitality towards strangers, for example, do and cannot but differ drastically in European and in Bedouin culture. Still, the deeper moral principles that underlie the moral rules and practices of a society ("Even strangers have their due—they too are entitled to respect, to courtesy, and to assistance in need") transcend the customs of any particular community. As concerns morality, culture is indeed a localizing and differentiating agent—but one that merely conditions to local circumstances those fundamental invariants that are inherent in the very conception of morality as such. The local "moralities" of various communities merely canalize and implement such general principles in a way that attunes them to the character of local conditions and circumstances. For the universality of fundamental moral principles does *not* mean that all moral agents must proceed in exactly the same way at the level of concrete detail. (To revert to the preceding example: medical competence too is also based on uniform and universal principles—conscientious care to provide the best available treatment for one's patients; but that does not mean that competent doctors must in all times, places, and circumstances administer the same treatments.)

The long and short of it is that the anthropological reduction of morality to mores just does not work. Some things are wrong in an absolute and universal way:

—killing another person for reasons of revenge

—taking improper advantage of people

—inflicting pointless harm

—lying and deception for selfish advantage, betraying a trust for personal gain

—breaking promises out of sheer perversity

—misusing the institutions of one's society for one's own purposes.

The unacceptability (i.e. moral inappropriateness) of such actions lies in the very idea of what morality is all about. Local custom to the contrary notwithstanding, such things are morally wrong anytime, anywhere, and for anyone. Their prohibitions are moral universals—parts of morality as such. (And so they hold good not just for us humans but for all rational beings.)

To be sure, different societies operate with different moral ground-rules at the procedural level. Some societies deem it outrageous for women to expose their faces, their breasts, their knees; others view this as altogether acceptable and perhaps even mandatory. But behind this variation stands a universal principle: "Respect people's sensibilities about the appropriate and acceptable appearance of fellow humans by conforming to established rules of proper modesty." This overarching principle is universal and absolute. Its implementation with respect to, say, elbows or belly buttons is of course something that varies with custom and the practices of the community. The rule itself is abstract and schematic—in need of implementing criteria as to what "proper modesty and due decorum" demand. The matter is one of a universal principle with variable implementations subject to "locally established standards and criteria" that are grounded in the particular customs of the community.

And so, while the concrete strictures of morality—its specific ordinances and procedural rules of thumb—will of course differ from age to

age and culture to culture, nevertheless the ultimate principles that serve to define the project of "morality" as such are universal. The uniform governing conception of "what morality is" suffices to establish and standardize those ultimate and fixed principles that govern the moral enterprise as such. At the level of fundamentals the variability of moral codes is underpinned by an absolute uniformity of moral principles and values. At the highest levels alone is there absoluteness: here an impersonal cogency of acceptance prevails—the rejection of appropriate contentions at this level involves a lapse of rational cogency. But at the lower levels there is almost always some room for variation—and dispute as well. (How concern for the well-being of one's fellows can be brought to effective expression, for example, will very much depend on the institutions of one's society—and also, to some extent, to one's place within it.)

At the level of basic principles, then, morality is absolute; its strictures at this level hold good for everyone, for all rational agents. And lower-level rules and rulings must—if valid—preserve a "linkage of subsumption" to those highest-level abstractions, a linkage mediated by way of more restrictive modes of implementation. These implementing rules involve contextual relativity—coordination with contingently variable (setting-dependent and era- and culture-variable) circumstances and situations. Thus while moral objectives and basic principles—those top levels of the hierarchy of moral norms—are absolute and universal, "slack" arises as we move further down the ladder, leaving room for (quite appropriate) contextual variability and differentiation. "Do not unjustifiably take the property of another for your own use" is an unquestionably valid principle of absolute morality. But it avails nothing until such time as there are means for determining what is "the property of another" and what constitutes "unjustified taking." "Don't break promises merely for your own convenience" is a universal moral rule, and as such is global and absolute. But what sorts of practices constitute making a valid promise is something that is largely determined through localized social conventions and personal principles. Local context—variable history, tradition, expectation-defining legal systems, evaluative commitments, and the like—thus makes for substantial variability at the level of operational rules and codes, of moral practices. But what we have here is a contextualism of local appropriateness that is something very different from a relativism of universal indifference—"Ultimately it does not matter, to each his own, it is just a matter of custom, morality is not more than mores."

And so, the looseness of fit or "slack" that we encounter increasingly as we move towards that bottom level of concreteness makes for considerable context-specific variability at that bottom level. Here underdetermination may come into play through the existence of plausible reasons for divergent positions without any prospect of categorical resolutors one way or the other. A situation of moral indeterminacy may arise where each one of several equally cogent positions can come into irreconcilable conflict. The same respect for life that leads one person to take up arms against a tyrant may lead another to walk in the path of pacifism and self-sacrifice. Either position is defensible and both deserve moral recognition and respect: in a dispute between these two variant appraisals there is no single unique right answer. In settings of scarcity (battlefield triage situations, for example) there may well be very real morally laden choices—relieve suffering vs. promote survival, for instance—where there is no definitive right or wrong.[17]

But a definite linkage of subordination and coordination is maintained throughout the implementation process. The validity of concrete rulings is always a matter of their attuning global (and abstract) prescriptions to local (and concrete) conditions. Without that linkage to the fixed highest-level absolutes, the linkage to morality is severed. For a particular ruling to be a proper moral ruling at all, there must be a suitable moral *rationale* for the action—a pathway of subordination linkages that connects it in a continuous manner all the way up to the characterizing aims of the moral enterprise. Varying practices and codes of procedure only possess moral validity insofar as they are implementations of a fixed and determinate set of moral principles. Moral validity must always root in a moral universality that is constrained by a *conceptual* fixity.

Morality's characteristic universality is thus inevitably mediated through factors that are variable, conventional, and culturally relative. That project-definitive general principle must be implemented in concrete circumstances and be adapted to them, even as the idea of hospitality towards strangers, for example, has to function differently in European and in Bedouin culture, seeing that deserts and cities are very different human environments. Still, the deeper moral principles that underlie the moral rules and practices of a society ("Even strangers have their due—they too are entitled to respect, to courtesy, and to assistance in need") transcend the customs of any particular community. As concerns morality, culture is indeed a localizing and differentiating agent—but one that merely condi-

tions to local circumstances those fundamental invariants that are inherent in the very conception of morality as such.

To be sure, different societies operate with different moral ground-rules at the concrete procedural level. Some societies deem it outrageous for women to expose their faces, their breasts, their knees; others view this as altogether acceptable and perhaps even mandatory. But behind this variation stands a universal principle: "Respect people's sensibilities about the appropriate and acceptable appearance of fellow humans by honoring the established rules of proper modesty." This overarching principle is universal and absolute. Its implementation with respect to, say, elbows or belly buttons is of course something that varies with custom and the practices of the community. The rule itself is abstract and schematic—in need of implementing criteria as to what "proper modesty and due decorum" demand. The matter is one of a universal principle with variable implementations subject to "locally established standards and criteria" that are grounded in the particular customs of the community.

The local "moralities" of various communities merely canalize and implement such general principles in a way that attunes them to the character of local conditions and circumstances. For the universality of fundamental moral principles does *not* mean that all moral agents must proceed in exactly the same way at the level of concrete detail. (To revert to the preceding example: medical competence too is also based on uniform and universal principles—conscientious care to provide the best available treatment for one's patients; but that does not mean that competent doctors must in all times, places, and circumstances administer the same treatments.)

And so, while the concrete strictures of morality—its specific ordinances and procedural rules of thumb—will of course differ from age to age and culture to culture, nevertheless the ultimate principles that serve to define the project of "morality" as such are universal. The uniform governing conception of "what morality is" suffices to establish and standardize those ultimate and fixed principles that govern the moral enterprise as such. At the top of that nomic hierarchy we have a condition of uniform fixity that is nowise at odds with situational and contextual variability at the lower levels.[18]

Chapter 4

IS REASONING ABOUT VALUES VICIOUSLY CIRCULAR?

Can value judgments be rationally validated without vicious, or at least vitiating circularity? In addressing this question it helps to begin with an analogy by asking this same question about substantive facts rather than normative values.

Suppose that we have a group of modes of—fact-substantive argumentation at our disposal: A_1, A_2, . . . A_n. Let it be that our assigned task is to justify their use—to validate them, in short, by some process of reasoning. To validate A_1 we must, of course, use some argumentation. If circular reasoning is proscribed and self-employment accordingly prohibited, then we can use only some of the remaining A_i here. We have at most *n*-1 modes of argumentation at our disposal. For the sake of convenience let it be that A_2 is one of them. But now let us ask about the validation of A_2. Both A_2 itself and A_1 are now ineligible on grounds of circularity. We thus have at most $n - 2$ arguments at our disposal for validating A_2. And now the handwriting is on the wall. By they time it comes down to validating A_n we have at most $n - n = 0$ modes of argumentation at our disposal. There is now *nothing* to be done. The lesson is crystal clear. If circularity is altogether proscribed in the regressive validation of modes of substantiative argument—if a given mode of argumentation is never to be used, directly or indirectly, in the course of its own validation—then it will be impossible to validate the entire manifold of arguments that we employ.

To be sure, there is one seeming exception here. The preceding line of reasoning supposes, naturally enough, that the manifold of argumentation modes at issue is *finite*. Clearly if this were not so, and if the argumentation modes at our disposal were an endless series A_1, A_2, A_3, . . . , then *every* argument mode could be validated in terms of others yet further down the line. Circularity—direct or indirect—could now readily be averted. But of course this is a process that we could never actually carry out all the way through. The project of validating *all* of our modes of argumentation, which, after all, was the aim of the enterprise is now a lost cause from the outset. Validation is now a Sisyphus-like project that one

could always pursue but never complete. After all, we are finite creatures that have only limited resources of time and information at our disposal. To be of effective use to us, the processes of validation must come to an end—they too must be finite. In this justificatory context a process that we cannot bring to a successful conclusion in the process that cannot achieve its goal.

This line of thought goes to show that we cannot forego the circularity of self-involvement in the context of validating the modes of supportive argumentation that we use in substantiate of our factual claims. In various other contexts of reasoning, such as demonstration, explanation, and definition, circularity is doubtless vicious and vitiating. But in the realm of argument-validation it is inevitable and indispensable.

As with facts so it is with values. The processes at issue with cognitive regress breed true to type as it were, even as a correct definition of a musical or archeological term must involve musical or archeological conceptions. In particular, it is a pivotal epistemic principle that both in demonstrative and in non-demonstrative inference a cogent cognitive regress must be thematically homogeneous: the clarificatory or justifactory account for a claim must always incorporate at least some commitments of the same thematic type as those at issue in the claim itself. Thus a cogent reason for a factual claim must itself be factual in the sense of involving at least some factual commitments, and exactly the same is true of evaluative and practical claims. Such cognitive regresses stay within the same topical arena: a cognitive item's regressive antecedents must always be of the same basic type as the item itself.

To be sure, the situation comes to be different when we turn from cognitive to noncognitive regresses such as causation. Causal production is by no means thematically homogeneous: life can come from non-life, liquid from non-liquid. But with cognitive regresses, there is no such thing as an origin of species, things have to run true-to-type across the successive regressive stages. Thus rationality is in this regard decisively different from causality where, as Darwin taught, new species can readily emerge. In matters of cognitive substantiation the filiation of thematic connection between contention and reason must always be preserved. In the cognitive realm, unlike the physical, the ancient Greek principle that "like can only come from like" obtains.

It should be noted that rational evaluation too is a form of cognition, seeing that what is at issue is simply knowledge about matters of value rather than about matters of fact. So here too justification is subject to what

might be called the principle of thematic homogeneity. Evaluative conclusions can be substantiated only via premisses that are somewhere along the line evaluative in their substance. Even as factual theses can be substantiated only through premisses of which at least some are of a factual character, so evaluative conclusions are substantiable only by means of premisses some of which are of a evaluative nature.

The thematic homogeneity means that substantiative arguments to evaluative conclusions must have evaluative inputs. The crucial point is that the value realm is inferentially closed. One cannot enter it inferentially from without. To provide a discursive or inferential validation of an evaluative conclusion, one must have recourse to at least some evaluative inputs as premisses for the reasoning, even if only inherently trivial cases. Inferentially, values must root in values: where *only* ostensibly value-free facts go in, values cannot come out.

Is such thematic homogeneity something vicious or vitiating where values are concerned? By no means. For here the following considerations come into play.

There is, indeed, an important difference between factual and evaluative substantiation which can be brought to light as follows. The circumstance that one must always use some facts to substantiate facts does not lead to circularity because you can in principle always use *different* facts, seeing the factual domain is not finite. However, we must also use values to substantiate values. And, the evaluative domain is finite since the value spectrum, though large, is nevertheless limited. So here the situation is substantially analogous to the thesis that "You must use arguments to validate arguments" which was discussed at the outset. In consequence, value validation like argument validation is in a way self-involving: we must use object of the sort at issue in the course of validating such objects. So here too there will be a circularity of sorts since the regress must come to a stop. But we arrive here at the instructive conclusion that is such situations of thematic homogeneity circular, or at any rate cyclic, reasoning becomes inescapable. The sort of circularity at issue with thematic homogeneity is not a matter of viciousness but rather of rational cogency, seeing that in these cognitive contexts the principle *ex nihilo nihil* obtains.

Another important consideration also comes into play here. The value-involvement of evaluative demonstration does not actually vitiate the discursive validation of our value judgements because while evaluative imputs are unavoidable, they are also in the end trivial. For while it is indeed true that the fact-value divide cannot be crossed by cogent demonstra-

tion without using some evaluative premisses, at least tacitly, it nevertheless can be crossed when the premisses are trivial and truistic. For example, consider the inference:

> Doing *A* would cause Smith needless and pointless distress.
>
> *Therefore*: It would be wrong for me, or anyone, to do *A*.

To be sure, this perfectly valid inference is only enthymematically so. For to achieve demonstrative stringency we must have recourse to the enthymematic premiss:

> "It is wrong to do something that avoidably causes people needless and pointless pain."

But this premiss is unproblematically available. It is, in fact, close to trivial since the mode of action at issue is a paradigm instance of moral transgression: given that pain is clearly something negative for us, its pointless and unnecessary infliction on some of us by others is a quintessential malfeasance.[19]

The salient consideration is that values *almost* emerge from facts—that the gap between facts and values, while important, is nevertheless often such a small one that it can be crossed by a step so short as to be effectively trivial, namely by means of truisms.

The salient fact is that in innumerable situations, the transition from factual premisses to evaluative conclusions is mediated by frequently enthymematic evaluative premisses that are essentially trivial and truistic in that they turn merely on an adequate grasp of concepts and issues. The evaluative negativity of certain transactions and circumstances is immediate, perspicuous, selfevident: it is simply a matter of the recognition, available to all morally competent agents as such, that some sorts of situations are painful, unpleasant, incongruous, and unacceptable and thereby constitute negativities. It forms part of the presuppositions of entry into the range of discourse at issue—the individual who does not recognize the inflection of needless avoidable pain as a negativity is someone with whom we cannot hold a meaningful discussion of moral issues.

Certain evaluations are thus simply a matter of an experientially grounded grasp of fundamentals. The propositions which formulate such states of affairs are trivial, truistic, and able to dispense with any need for

grounding in something further that supports *ab extra*. For example, the negativity of pain and with it the moral inappropriateness of its deliberate and needless propagation is simply an instance of such an evaluative truism.

What marks such an evaluative truism as enthymenatially available is not its profound truth but its very triviality. If someone were to dissent from it, we would have no alternative but to take the view that this betrays the absence of any real grasp on the central concepts operative in discussion and deliberation within the domain at issue. We would have to take essentially the same reaction here that we would take towards someone who failed to acknowledge that knives have blades. If someone were to deny "Knives have blades" we could not take the line that he was overlooking some significant fact about the world, but simply have to acknowledge that he did not have a firm grasp on what it is to be a knife. Similarly, if someone denied assent to "It is morally wrong to inflict needless pain on people" we would take the line that he did not have a proper grasp on deep truths about morality, but merely that he simply did not know what morality is all about. The same story holds not only for "injuring people needlessly," but also in an endless variety of other cases such as "taking something that belongs to another simply because we want to have it" on the negative side, and "helping someone in a way that involves no loss for other people" on the positive side.

This condition of affairs takes the steam out of a negative resolution of the fact-derivability question in a debate about the subjectivity of values. For even though the inferential transition from facts to values must always make use of some evaluative theses, nevertheless such inferential mediators can be wholly unproblematic truisms which, as such, stand secure from the vagaries of potentially idiosyncratic value appraisals.

Subjectivists accordingly obtain no aid and comfort from recognizing finding that values cannot be derived from facts alone—that explicitly or implicitly evaluative claims are always required to render such argumentation cogent. For this circumstance is stripped of any subjectivistic implications by the consideration that the requisite value-inputs can be altogether trivial and truistic. On this basis, the prospects of value objectivism are unaffected by a recognition that values cannot be derived from facts.

The reality of it is that descriptive facts and normative facts are more closely interrelated than is generally recognized. They share a common epistemology. Rational cognition and rational evaluation run wholly parallel in point of validation because cognition too is an ultimately evaluative

enterprise. Values and descriptive facts are both governed by norms. Our knowledge of both sorts of facts, the descriptively informative and the normative-evaluative hinges on the criteriological bearing of the question: What merits approbation? To be sure, this overarching question bears a very different construction on each side of the issue, with approbation as acceptance on the side of descriptive information, and approbation as preference on the side of evaluative judgement. But acceptance too is a preference of sorts: an epistemic preference.

Rational appropriateness in the criteriology of cognition is determined as follows:

> Descriptively informative theses or descriptive judgements qualify as rationally acceptable or cognitively valid which optimally systematize our cognitive data, where systematization proceeds under the aegis of descriptively factual generalizations.

In an entirely parallel way, we have the following situation on the side of the criteriology of evaluation:

> Normatively evaluative theses or evaluative judgements qualify as rationally acceptable or normatively valid which optimally systematize our evaluative data, where systematization proceeds under the aegis of normative rules.

Both the descriptive and the normative sides begin with the data of experience. In the alethic, descriptively truth oriented, case, these are the data of sensation and their systemic extensions in factual theories. In the evaluative, normatively value oriented case, these are the data of evaluation—of pro-or-con appraisal and their systemic extensions in normative rules. In both cases we proceed criteriologically in terms of the optimal systematization of experience, by just the same device of seeking the best available extrapolation of the data, the interpretation that best coheres with the rest of our experience.

In the cognitive case, substantiative validity here amounting to presumptive truth or factual correctness, calls for the optimal inductive systematization of our informative experiences under the aegis of principles of explanation. In the normative case, substantiative validity, here amounting to presumptive appropriateness or evaluative correctness calls for the optimal normative systematization of our evaluative experiences under the ae-

gis of principles of justification. The parallelism between the two cases is depicted in the accompanying display, which portrays a value-cognitivism that sees the processes of rational inquiry and of rational evaluation as proceeding in a strictly parallel way. On both sides, system building provides the key for discriminating between what is tenable and what is not. One selfsame fundamental idea of controlling validity through the optimal systematization of the relevant data runs uniformly across both the cognitive and normative domains. In either case, this is a matter of systematization of experience:

> *cognition*: rational systematization of informative experience through principles of explanation.
>
> *evaluation*: rational systematization of affective experience through principles of justification

Essentially, the same standard applies throughout: a judgment is valid if it belongs to the optimal, most cogent systematization of the whole range of our relevant, alethically fact-oriented experience on the one side and that of our relevant, axiologically value-oriented experience on the other.

The coherence approach to value criteriology in terms of judgmental systematization accordingly runs wholly parallel to the coherence approach to acceptance criteriology.[20] The parallelism of the systemic process operative in both the cognitive and evaluative sectors engenders a symmetry of validation on the sides of cognitive and evaluative reason that once again exhibits the fundamental unity of reason.

No wonder, then, that altogether analogous issues arise on both the cognitive and the evaluative sides. In the alethic case, we face the problem of bridging a seemingly insuperable gap between appearance and reality, between phenomenally subjective claims at the level of appearances and impressions, and ontologically objective claims at the level of being and actuality. The coherence criteriology of factual truth is of good avail here. For it authorizes the inference from claims on the order of “There looks to be a cat on the mat” to claims on the order of “There actually is a cat on the mat” through optimal systematization. In making this inference, we exploit the circumstance that this particular ruling regarding the nature of the real best systematizes our cognitive commitments overall. An entirely parallel situation prevails on the evaluative, axiological side, where we face the problem of bridging a seemingly insuperable gap between subjective

claims at the level of evaluative feelings and objective claims at the level of actual evaluation—between what seems wicked and what is wicked. Of course what the coherence criteriology of norms enables us to do in this case is to leap across just exactly this gap. It puts us in a position to move from claims on the order of "Stealing seems wicked to me" to claims on the order of "Stealing is wrong" through the mediation of the principle of best systematization.

On both sides of experience, both with the sensory observation and evaluative assessment, we thus leap across the gap separating subjective seeming from objective being by one selfsame device-systematization of the data. In each case we enter into a realm of objective claims through triangulation from the data of experience. Of course, the greater extent of the interpersonal uniformity of sensory as compared with evaluative experience makes the case of sensation simpler than that of evaluation. But the difference is one of degree rather than of kind.

This fundamental parallelism means that value issues should also be seen in a 'realistic' light. Matters of value too can and should be regarded as objectively factual—the difference is just that we are dealing with evaluative rather than simply informative facts. The possibility of rational agreement, disagreement, criticism, correction, and the like, arises on the evaluative side also. We must avoid the confusion of values with tastes. "There's no disputing about tastes" may be true, but "There's no disputing about values" certainly is not. Values too can be altogether objective, in that value claims admit of rational support through impersonally cogent considerations.

To re-emphasize: the rational validation of descriptively factual claims in empirical inquiry and of evaluative claims in normative assessment proceed in closely analogous ways. Both consist in the rational systematization of experience-informative and evaluative experience, respectively. The parallelism of alethic and axiological criteriology indicates that what is sauce for the informative-inductive goose is also sauce for the evaluative-normative gander. This circumstance is highly important from the angle of philosophical concerns. For one thing, it illustrates from yet another direction of approach the holistic unity and integrity of reason. For another, it indicates that the very existence of an evaluative sector of reason hinges on the prospects of an objective rational inquiry into the nature and bearing of evaluative considerations. And this is all to the good. Given the systemic unity of reason, the whole of rationality would collapse into uselessness if rational deliberation about matters of value were in principle

impossible.[21] Evaluative rationality is a significant and salient indispensable side of rationality itself.

Chapter 5

RATIONAL ECONOMY AND THE EVOLUTIONARY IMPETUS

1. PRACTICAL REASON

In matters of theoretical and practical reason alike, philosophy traditionally takes a decidedly intellectualist approach. Rationality, as philosophers have generally seen it, is a matter of consistency, coherence, and conformity to general principles of keeping one's cognitive processes on the right track of approved theoretical standards. But while this traditional approach is all very good as far as it goes, it does not do justice to the procedural and action-oriented aspect of the matter. For reason is, at the core, a matter of process, procedure, and action—of the intelligent pursuit of appropriate objectives. And this activistic dimension has implications that philosophers all too often neglect in their emphasis on mere consistency, coherence, and conformity to general principles.

2. THE EVALUATIVE AND ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Let us begin with practical reason—the use of reason for the guidance of action. Rationality here consists in the efficient and effective pursuit of appropriate goals. Accordingly, practical reason requires and is dependent upon rational evaluation. For it hinges upon the evaluative employment of rational reflection and analysis to determine on the one hand the inherent appropriateness of goals (inherently evaluative reason) and on the other the efficiency and effectiveness of means (instrumentally evaluative reason). Rational adequacy in practical regards requires *efficacy* (can they get the job done?) and *efficiency* (could the job be done more simply in another way?)

The Principle of Least Effort is crucial for practical rationality. To expend greater resources on the pursuit of objectives than is required for their realization is a striking form of practical irrationality. And this is where economics comes in seeing that comparative efficiency and effectiveness are prominent among the ruling standards of economic rationality

where the efficient and effective use of resources in the pursuit of one's ends—becomes critical since evaluating the worth of goals ("Is the game worth the candle) is a key aspect of economic rationality. Moreover, those ends themselves must be duly evaluated. A good many be totally legitimate. But it is always only one among others. The meta-evaluative question of how large a place in the sun it merits cannot be avoided. Health is important, but we cannot spend every waking moment in its pursuit.

Accordingly, both sectors of means-ends evaluations are indispensable for the assessment of practical rationality. Neither the sagacious pursuit of inappropriate goals nor the ineffectual pursuit of appropriate goals deserves the authorizing stamp of rational approval.

It deserves emphasis in this regard that what is valuable for us humans is not something that we *decide* upon. It is mandated for us by the human condition—by the nature of our emplacement in the world's scheme of things. And what is basic here is the issue of needs. Our requirements for the air we breathe, and for the food, shelter, and clothing we use are matters of need. To be sure we can meet these needs in very different ways—but meet them we must. Our wants root in and emerge from our needs. It is they that are at the basis of what is to count as appropriate valuation for us.

3. PRACTICAL RATIONALITY ENCOMPASSES THEORETICAL RATIONALITY

A good case can be made out for saying that even the prime concerns of theoretical reason, namely consistency and coherence, are themselves simply matters of practical rationality. For information that is inconsistent or incoherent is not able to achieve the aims of the enterprise of inquiry that is at issue with theoretical reason. Answers to our questions that are inconsistent ("yes *and* no") are effectively no answers at all, and information that is incoherent is "information" in name only. What is wrong with theoretical incoherence is thus ultimately something pragmatic—its frustration of the cardinal aim of the practical enterprise of inquiry—of securing sensible answers to our questions.

The primacy of practical reason must accordingly be acknowledged. Theoretical reason itself stands under its sway. After all, inquiry itself is a practice and in the pursuit of its aims the issue of efficacy and effectiveness in goal realization do and must constitute our criterion of procedural ade-

quacy. Already Thomas Aquinas accordingly saw practical reason (*intellectus practicus*) as an extension of theoretical reason (*intellectus speculativus*): *intellectus speculativus per extensionen fit practicus* (*Summa Theologica*: qu. 79, art. 11). As he saw it, practical reason is broader than theoretical reason and embraces it: cognitive practice is a special brand of practice in general, practice whose aim is the accession of information and the resolution of questions. And this essentially pragmatic/fundamentalistic view of the matter is surely correct.

A practicalistic perspective upon cognition is not only possible but eminently desirable. Ideas convictions and beliefs, methods as cognitive conditions of cognitive affairs. They are tools we use to solve our problems: answering questions, guiding actions (both theoretical and practical). They can be viewed in their procedural, methodological, use-oriented roles.

We are embarked here on a broadly economic approach—but one that proceeds in terms of a value theory that envisions a generalized "economy of values," and from whose standpoint the traditional economic values (the standard economic costs and benefits) are merely a rather special case. Such an *axiological* approach sees theoretical rationality as an integral component of that wider rationality that calls for the effective deployment of out limited resources.

4. THE PRAGMATIC ASPECT OF INQUIRY

The characteristic genius of pragmatism lies in its insistence on being practical about things and specifically in its steadfast refusal to allow us to view the very best that we can possibly do as not being good enough. Its operative injunctions are: Approach the issue of the cognitive accessibility of truth by asking the classical pragmatic question: "If that is indeed how realities stand, then what would be the best sort of evidence for it that we could expect to achieve?" Realize that we have no access to matters of fact save through the mediation of evidence that is often incomplete and imperfect. And realize too that to say that the best evidence is not good enough is to violate Peirce's cardinal pragmatic imperative never to bar the path of inquiry.

In line with this perspective, a realistic pragmatism insists upon pressing the question: "If *A* were indeed the answer to a question *Q* of ours, what sort of evidence could we possibly obtain for this?" And when we obtain such evidence—as much as we can reasonably be expected to

achieve—then pragmatism to see this as good enough. ("Be prepared to regard the best that can be done as good enough" is one of pragmatism's fundamental axioms.) If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, quacks like a duck, (and so on) then—so pragmatism insists, we are perfectly entitled to stake the claim that it is a duck—at any rate until such time as clear indications to the contrary come to light. Once the question "Well what more could you reasonably will ask for?" meets with no more than hesitant mumbling, then sensible pragmatists say: "Feel free to go ahead and make the claim."

It is not that true *means* warranted assertability, or that warranted assertability guarantees *truth*. What is the case, rather, is that evidence here means "evidence *for truth*" and (methodologically) warranted assertability means "warrantedly assertable *as true*." After all, estimation here is a matter of truth estimation and where the conditions for rational estimation are satisfied we are—ipso facto—rationally authorized to let that estimates stand surrogate to the truth. The very idea that the best we can do is not good enough for all relevant reasonable purposes is—so pragmatism and common sense alike insist—simply is absurd, a thing of unreasonable hyperbole. Whatever theoretical gap there may be between warrant and truth is something which the very nature of concepts like "evidence" and "rational warrant" and "estimation" authorizes us in crossing.

And so at this point we have in hand the means for resolving the question of the connection between thought and reality that is at issue with "the truth." The mediating linkage is supplied by heeding the *modus operandi* of inquiry. For cognition is a matter of truth estimation, and a properly effected estimate is, by its nature as such, something that is entitled to serve, at least for the time being and until further notice, as a rationally authorized surrogate for whatever it is that it is or estimate of.

5. THE EVOLUTIONARY ASPECT

The ancients saw man as "the rational animal" *(zoōn logon echōn)*, set apart from the world's other creatures by the capacity for speech and deliberation. And following the precedent of Greek philosophy, Western thinkers have generally deemed the deliberate use of knowledge for the guidance of our actions to be at once the glory and the duty of *homo sapiens*.

Humans have evolved within nature to fill the ecological niche of an intelligent being. Reason-deploying intelligence— the use of our brains to guide action by figuring out the apparent best—is the survival instrument

of our species in much the same way that other creatures ensure their survival by being prolific, or tough, or well-sheltered. Intelligence constitutes our particular "competitive advantage" in the evolutionary scheme of things. As Darwin himself already stressed, in a competitive Darwinism world a creature that can understand how things work in its environment and exploit this understanding in action thereby secures an evolutionary edge. And this means that practical reason—with its insistence on the intelligence in our quest for efficiency and effectiveness in satisfying our needs and wants—is an indispensable instrumentality programmed by evolution into the nature of the human condition.

Given the reasonable agent's well-advised predilection for *success* in one's ventures, the fact that the cognitive methods we employ have a good record of demonstrated effectiveness in regard to explanation, prediction, and control is not surprising but only to be expected: the community of rational inquirers would have given them up long ago were they not comparatively successful. The effectiveness of our cognitive methodology is thus readily accounted for on evolutionary principles that pivot on rational selection and the requirements for survival through adoption and transmission. Out possession of intelligence proceeds through *natural* selection but our modus operandi in its employment proceeds through *rational* selection. And so on both sides alike—the biological and the cultural—the pressures of evolutionary survival speak in favor of the rational economy that lies at the root of reason at large.

Our cognitive faculties are doubtless the product of biological evolution, but the processes and procedures by which we put them to work are the results of a *cultural* evolution which proceeds through rationally guided trial and error in circumstances of a pragmatic preference for retaining those processes and procedures that prove theorists efficient and effective. Rational people have a strong bias for what works.[6] And progress in this direction is swift because once rationality gains an inch, it wants a mile. Of course, cultural evolution is shaped and canalized by constraints that themselves are the products of biological evolution. For our instincts, inclinations, and natural dispositions are all programmed into us by evolution. The transition from a biologically advantageous economy of effective physical effort to a cognitively advantageous economy of effective intellectual efforts is a short and easy step.

Yet, people are surely not all that rational—they have their moments of aberration and self-indulgence. Might not such tendencies selectively favor the survival of the ineffective over the effective—of the fallacious

rather than the true—and slant the process of cognitive evolution in inappropriate directions? C. S. Peirce certainly recognized this prospect:

> Logicality in regard to practical matters. . . is the most useful quality an animal can possess, and might, therefore, result from the action of natural selection; but outside of these it is probably of more advantage to the animal to have his mind filled with pleasing and encouraging visions, independently of their truth; and thus, upon unpractical subjects, natural selection might occasion a fallacious tendency of thought.[22]

However, the methodological orientation of the approach that is envisioned here provides a safeguard against an unwarranted penchant for such fallacious tendencies. At the level of individual beliefs "pleasing and encouraging visions" might indeed receive a survival-favoring impetus. But this unhappy prospect is effectively removed where a *systematic* method of inquiry is concerned—a method that must by its very synoptic nature lie in the sphere of the pragmatically effective.

It is accordingly not difficult to give examples of the operation of evolutionary processes in the cognitive domain. The intellectual landscape of human history is littered with the skeletal remains of the extinct dinosaurs of this sphere. Examples of such defunct methods for the acquisition and explanatory utilization of information include astrology, numerology, oracles, dream-interpretation, the reading of tea leaves or the entrails of birds, animism, the teleological physics of the Presocratics, and so on. No doubt, such processes continue in issue in some human communities to this very day; but clearly not among those dedicated to serious inquiry into nature's ways—i.e., scientists. There is nothing intrinsically absurd or inherently contemptible about such unorthodox cognitive programs—even the most occult of them have a long and not wholly unsuccessful history. (Think, for example, of the prominent role of numerological explanation from Pythagoreanism, through Platonism, to the medieval Arabs, down to Kepler in the Renaissance.) Distinctly different scientific methodologies and programs have been mooted: Ptolemaic "saving the phenomena" vs. the hypothetico-deductive method, or again, Baconian collectionism vs. the post-Newtonian theory of experimental science, etc. The emergence, development, and ultimate triumph of scientific method of inquiry and explanation invite an evolutionary account—though clearly one that involves rational rather than natural selection.

An individual's heritage comes from two main sources: a biological heritage derived from the parents and a cultural heritage derived from the society. However, in the development of our knowledge, this second factor becomes critical. To establish and perpetuate itself in any community of *rational* agents, a practice or method of procedure must prove itself in the course of experience. Not only must it be to some extent effective in realizing the pertinent aims and ends, but it must prove itself to be more efficient than comparably available alternatives. With societies composed of rational agents, the pressure of means-ends efficacy is ever at work in forging a process of cultural (rather than natural) selection for replacing less by more cost-effective ways of achieving the group's committed ends—its cognitive ends emphatically included.

6. THE PRIMACY OF PRACTICE

Deflationary epistemologists—including such soft-line pragmatists as William James—are fearful that if we take a hard objectivistic line on the meaning of truth then truth becomes transcendentally inaccessible and scepticism looms. And they accordingly insist that we soften up our understanding of the nature of truth. But another option is perfectly open, namely to retain the classical (hard) construction of the *meaning* of truth as actual facticity ("correspondence to fact") and to soften matters up on the epistemological/ontological side by adopting a "realistic" view of what is *criteriologically* required for staking rationally appropriate truth claims.

Pragmatists accordingly have the option of approaching "the truth" with a view to the methodology of evidence—of criteriology rather than definitional revisionism. The sort of truth pragmatism that moves in this (surely sensible) direction is one that does not use pragmatic considerations to validate claims and theses directly, but rather uses inquiry methods (claim-validating processes) for this purpose, while validating these practices themselves not in terms of the truth of the products (a clearly circular procedure) but in terms of the capacity of their products to provide the materials for successful prediction and effective applicative control. Accordingly, the most promising position here would be what might be characterized as a *methodological* pragmatism rather than a *thesis* pragmatism. That is, it is a position that assesses thesis assertability in terms of the methodological processes of substantiation and their assesses method appropriateness in terms of the practical and applicative utility—systematically considered—of the thesis from which the methods vouch. Such an approach

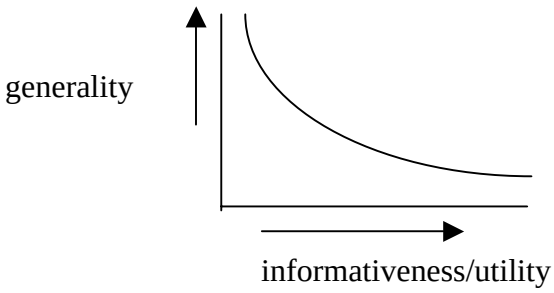
calls for a prime emphasis on the methodology of truth-estimation, bringing into the forefront the processes of evidentiation and substantiation by which we in practice go about determining what to accept as truth.

The truth/reality connection that is operative in our thought and is certainly not a cognitively isolated issue subject to no sorts of theory-external quality controls. "Thought externalized" objectivity is still at our disposal. For with regard to our methodological resources of truth-estimation we can indeed deploy a theory-external means of quality control—viz., applicative efficacy. The *success* of our thought-guided practice is something that lies substantially outside of the range of thought itself. And so the arbitrament of practice—of efficacy in matters of application for the purposes of prediction and control (i.e., effective active and passive involvement with nature)—can and will in the final analysis serve as a theory-external monitor over our theorizing. Theory is, in this sense, subordinated to practice, a circumstance that speaks loud and clear on behalf of a realistic pragmatism—a position whose orientation is at once realistic and pragmatic because successful praxis is, in the end, the best index of reality that is at our effective disposal.

7. LOCAL VS. GLOBAL VALIDATION

In taking the pragmatic turn environed in the preceding discussion one particular sort of caution must be exercised—the avoidance of overgeneralization. The methods we use for answering questions and resolving problems will generally be special purpose methods that are not global in their utility and efficacy but issue-specific with respect to definitely defined and delimited issues. Methods are instrumentalities which, like tools are almost invariably special-purpose rather than general-purpose. (You cannot get a nail into wood with a screwdriver—let alone a tape measure.) In specific our cognitive methods for question resolution and information acquisite for practical guidance have to be devised with respect to the sorts of issues on the agenda—the methods of geometry do not meet the requirements of cost-accounting. So the idea of a global methodology for resolving the "problems of knowledge"—let alone the problems of life—is something quite unrealistic. Rational comportment will unavoidably have to be contextualized in its detail. What rationality is is uniform, but what is rational depends on the situation-specific details.

And here, as elsewhere, we come up against the dialectic of generality/specificity vs. informativeness/utility. The situation is as is depicted in the adjoining diagram:



high-generality processes have low informativeness/utility, while high informativeness utility processes have low generality. The injunction "do the best thing" is correct pretty well across the board, but offers us virtually zero guidance as to how to proceed. By contrast detailedly effective procedural instructions have a corregendingly narrowed range of effective applicability.[23]

To be sure, what an issue-specific validation of functional efficacy gives us is not a grounding in some prior and more secure foundation; it is not a matter of an *a fronte* justification of being based on something yet more fundamental and secure. Rather it is an *a tergo* validation in terms of consequential efficacy considerations. It is a validation via operational utility—a pragmatism not of doctrine but of performance. Its rationale pivots on reason's neo-negotiable preference for factual efficacy—for instrumentalities that work.

8. THE RATIONALE OF RATIONALITY

This said, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the linkage of reason to successful practice is not air-tight. Our most rational plans and decisions "gang aft agley."

Reason can issue no absolute guarantees. We neither have nor can secure any categorical assurance that doing what reason urges will in actual fact turn out to be the best thing to do—that her recommendations may not actually prove counter-productive. And this means that we must live the life of reason in the full recognition that, while always and everywhere insisting on obedience to her requirements, she nevertheless can provide no certified guarantee that in following here counsels as best we can, we may not actually damage rather than enhance the prospects of attaining our le-

gitimate ends. Reason can and does recognize full well that there is no way of averting the fact that life in this world is a risky proposition.

Why then honor reason's demands—why follow her guidance? Simply because abstract analysis and concrete experience alike serve to indicate that we can do no better. There is, and can be, no somehow superior reason-variant course of procedure for, after all, if any seemingly "other" course of action boded a better prospect of success then rationality itself would at once mandate its adoption. Fractious creature though we humans are, evolution—biological and cultural alike—has programmed in us a tendency to respect the voice of reason. And if and when we do actually listen to that voice we hear its insistence that by all visible indications no more promising source of counsel is available to us.

To be sure, we are creatures of free will: as free to choose the course of unreason as that of reason, of foolishness as that of wisdom. But here as everywhere else in life, choice comes at a price. And the price that unreason exacts from us is a diminution of the prospect of obtaining those results whose realization crucial for our best interests, realistically construed.

Chapter 6

EVALUATION AND THE FALLACY OF RESPECT NEGLECT

1. RESPECT NEGLECT

Evaluation is inherently diversified: it requires differentiation: objects are not of value, period, but of value in particular respects. The error that is here characterized as The Fallacy of Respect Neglect is particularly common among philosophers. It is a prominent instance of the broader Fallacy of Illicit Amalgamation which consists in treating as a single uniform unit something that in fact involves a diversified plurality of separate issues. Specifically it has the form of treating a feature *F* as an unified property that things do or do not have, where in fact *F* is a matter of respects so that things can have *F* in one respect and lack it in another. There are many instances of this phenomenon, for example the *simplicity* of scientific theories, the *preferability* of objects of choice, the *fairness* of decision processes, and many others.

Clearly some evaluative features of things are monolithic and categorical, a matter of yes/no and on/off. And act is either legal or not, a task either feasible or not. But, equally clearly, this is not always the situation that prevails.

Some features are maxi-respectival: To have *F* you must have it in *all* respects: if something fails to be *F* in a single respect, then it is not *F* at all. Perfection is like that, as is the justice of an action or its legality or its honesty or its courtesy.

Other features are mini-perspectival: To have *F* it suffices to have it in *some* respects: if something has *F* in even a single respect, then it has *F* flat-out. Imperfection and injustice like that, as is the generosity of an act or its impropriety.

It is easy to see that in denying features that are maxi-perspectival or in ascribing features that are mini-perspectival, we can afford to neglect respects. But of course not all features will be like that.

Moreover, it may also happen that there is respectival dominance where one single factor is by itself all-determinative. In the case of safety, sur-

vivability-geared safety from destruction will be an example: If we do not survive in the short run there is no use worrying about matters further down the road. But it is not easy to think of other examples of this sort where one single respect-dimension is all-out predominant and thereby able to speak for the totality so that a proliferation of respects does not come into it. But many important features of things are neither mini-or maxi-perspectival. And here the proliferation of respects becomes critical. And the fallacy of respect-neglect arises when this critical consideration is ignored.

Let us consider some examples.

2. SIMPLICITY

Simplicity has certainly played a prominent role in twentieth century philosophy of science—especially in methodologically governed discussions of reductive reasoning. From C. S. Peirce to Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach and beyond, philosophers of science have seen the simplicity of theories as a key factor for their acceptability.

All the same, it is clear on even causal inspection that the idea of simplicity in relation to theories splits apart into a proliferation of respects.

- *expressive simplicity*: syntactical economy in the conceptual machinery of formulation.

- *instrumental simplicity*: in terms of the amount of mathematical apparatus needed for formulating the theory (mere algebra, calculus, complex function theory, etc.)

- *computational simplicity*: how easy it is to compute results and outcomes by use of the theory,

- *pedagogical simplicity*: how easy it is to teach the theory and to learn it.

And the salient point is that we here encounter a diversified manifold of perspectives of consideration from which one theory can be seen as simpler than another.

It is an important consideration that these different modes of simplicity are not necessarily in agreement. Consider an analogy: the simplicity of automobiles. One can be simpler than another in point of

- being easier to manufacture
- being easier to maintain
- being easier to start
- being easier to drive

And these can and actually do conflict with one another. A car that is easier/simpler to manufacture is not necessarily one that is easier/simpler to drive. Moreover, even these factors themselves proliferate further. The "easier to drive" will split apart into "in dry conditions," "in wet conditions," "on smooth and well maintained roads," etc. With automobiles simplicity is critically respectival. And the simplicity of theories is in much the same boat.

To say that one object—be it a theory, an auto, an action, idea, belief, or whatever—is simpler than another is perfectly proper and meaningful—but only if one specifies some particular respect or aspect. Here one cannot appropriately speak of simplicity *tout court*. And to fail to acknowledge that simplicity is subject to fission into a plurality of respects that may potentially even conflict with one another is to succumb to what might be characterized as the Fallacy of Respect Neglect.

It would be futile to seek to escape the Fallacy of Respect Neglect by seeking to have it that *real* simplicity is a matter of being simpler in *every* respect, so that respectivization becomes irrelevant. But this is all too often decidedly impracticable. But of course, whenever different respects are mutually conflicting—as we see in the automobile example—there will be no workable way of taking this step. And this situation is only too common.

3. FURTHER EXAMPLES

Political theorists of democratic inclination often maintain that in matters of social decision the preferability of alternatives is to be decided by the choices of individuals. Philosophers of science maintain that in matters of

theory choice the preferability of alternatives is to be decided by the explanatory merit of theories. But the eligibility of items from the standpoint of individuals may well be (and all too often is) a matter of respect with *A* being preferred to *B* in one regard and *B* to *A* in another—and neither respect predominating over the other. And the explanatory merit of theories in one regard (e.g., generality) and range of applicability may be at odds with its explanatory merit in another (such as ease of application).

Merit and preferability in all applications of their idea are matters of respect. Take something as simple as a house. Clearly one may be superior to another in part of location, roominess, circulation, solidity, etc. And this sort of situation obtains with matters of social policy as well.

Take equality—another theme that is currently popular with political theorists. Equality can be a matter of opportunity, of treatment in matter of how, in the distribution of goods and bads, etc. And here too there can be conflicts. In giving each holder of a lottery ticket an equal chance at the prize we preclude their sharing it equally.

Again take the idea—popular with some philosophers of science—that scientific theories are equivalent when they have the same mathematical structure." This could perhaps be made to work if the idea of structure were a respect free monolith rather than respectival. But just as a sentence expressed in language has a grammatical structure, a lexicographic structure, a theoretic structure, a rhythmic structure, etc. so a scientific theory has many sorts of structure. And indeed even a given mathematical fact can find its expression in ways that differ substantially in structure. (The structure of the expression of the fact that two plus two is four is very different in the authentic of Principia Mathematica and in its formulation by Goedelian means.)

Hermeneutic theorists occasionally embark on the quest for correct interpretation. But clearly the real question is not "Is there a single right interpretation?" as per a recent book of that title.[24] For to ask if there is one single right interpretation (of a literary or philosophical text, a painting, etc.) is to invite the Fallacy of Respect Neglect. To pose a genuinely meaningful question one would have to ask "Is there one single interpretation that is optimal in a certain particular specified respect." And here the correct answer is that rather uninteresting response—sometimes Yes and sometimes No. After all, that original question is muddled through the fact that interpretations have different aspects, different respects. Interpretation can be geared to the intentions of the author, to the general understandings and expectations of the audience, to the issue of utility for our own prob-

lems, and so on. And it is effectively impossible—in principle as in practice—that one single interpretation can be right or optimal in every respect.

Such deliberations point to a general conclusion. Committing the Fallacy to Respect Neglect is invites unhappy consequences—confusion if not outright self-contradiction. And this is not only in the case of the particular issue that presently concerns us—such as simplicity—but is a whole host of other cases as will (preferability, similarity, utility, predictability, importance, testability, etc.).

4. PERSPECTIVAL DISSONANCE AND NON-AMALGAMATION

It might be thought that respective fusion or amalgamation is the cure for respect-proliferation. It is not. Thus suppose some good or bad is to be allocated among several equally deserving parties. Then there is

- fairness of opportunity
- fairness of result
- fairness of process

In point of result it seems unfair to allocate the entire item to *X* rather than *Y*. But if this was determined by a spin of the roulette wheel then there was fairness of opportunity. On the other hand, if the good was divisible and could have been shared out in equal portions then it processualy unfair to allocate it by lot. But of course the case of indivisible goods shows that one cannot reply say that (categorical) fairness is simply a of being fair in every respect, seeing that here realizing fairness is one respect may prelude the prospect of realizing it in another.

Whenever a higher-level factor of desirability—such as that of simplicity or economy or convenience—fissions into a plurality of different respects or aspects these will often—perhaps even generally—prove to be combination-resistant. Consider the analogy of ease and convenience in the context of food. This is clearly something that is subject to respect-proliferation:

- easier to produce
- easier to prepare

- easier to digest
- easier to acquire

A food that is easy to prepare for eating (e.g., a ripe banana)—will not be easier to come by if we don't live in a banana-growing region. A food may well need more complicated preparation (e.g., cooking) if it is to be easier to digest, etc. there is no way in which one food can be easier overall than another because the various respects of ease may be—and indeed are—in conflict with one another.

And just the same sort of situation is going to obtain in the case of such concepts as similarity or preferability or the like. All of them dissolve into a plurality of respects which will themselves have yet further respects. And—most relevantly for our present purposes—this is going to hold for simplicity as well. For most any respect-involving notion like those just mentioned is going to be inherently diversified, subject to different aspects that cannot simply be forced together in smooth coordination because more of one of them will be obtainable only at the price of less of another.

And this internal diversity stands in the way of amalgamation even as the inner tension among the various rational aspects of simplicity precludes one thing's being simpler than another in every potentially relevant respect. There will be no way of fusing the different aspects into one unified overall result. For seeing that the simplicity—in our present case—is inherently respect-localized it fails to admit a global, symphatically unified version. There will be simplicity (or preferability, or similarity, etc.) in this or that respect, but no such thing as an all-in, unrestrictedly global realization of the idea. And to insist on overlooking those manifold discordant respects is to prelude the realization of anything meaningful. The complex realities of the case block the prospect of integrative fusion, of overall unification.

5. SUMMARY

The problematic nature of respect neglect roots in the fact that we cannot in general make absolutes out of comparatives. One leaf may be greener than another, but there is no such thing as an anything absolutely or categorically green leaf. One rock may be harder than another but there is no such thing as an absolutely hard rock. One route may be more easier than an-

other, but there is no such thing as an absolutely or categorically easy route. Against this background the move from comparative to absolute simplicity—or equality, or preferability, etc.—becomes deeply problematic.

Nor can we generally make categoricals out of respectivals. A sentence may be awkward in the this or that respect but it cannot be unrestrictedly awkward. A tool may be useful in this or that respect, but it cannot be unqualifiedly useful. One task can be more challenging than another in this or that respect, but it cannot be unconditionally challenging. And even so, one thing can be simpler than another in this or that respect, but it is not only will not but cannot be categorically (unrestrictedly, unqualifiedly, and unavoidably), simple.

The long and short of it is that respect neglect is a common pitfall in philosophical deliberations. Nor no fault and flaw is more ominous in philosophy than falling into self-contradiction. And when matters stand one way when something obtains in one respect and not in another, then (as Aristotle already insisted[25]) in neglecting their respect and riding roughshod over the differences involved, we all too readily fall into contradiction and thereby become unable to do that to which philosophers must always aspire: talking good sense.

Chapter 7

CREDIT FOR MAKING A DISCOVERY

1. THE PROBLEM

Credit for achievement is a paradigm instance of cognitive evaluation. But just how is one properly to allocate credit for making a discovery in science or elsewhere where the conjoint effort of several individuals is involved? When a group of investigators cooperates in making a discovery, how should the credit for this achievement be apportioned among them to assure that everyone receives their proper share?[26]

The problem being considered here is not that of assessing importance—of determining how much credit there is to go around. That is something else again. The present problem, rather, is that of how that credit, be it great or small, should be allocated to the parties responsible for the discovery at issue? It is, accordingly, not the amount of credit but its distribution that is at issue.

Various interesting findings are available to illuminate how credit for discoveries in matters of science and learning is actually bestowed. One example is the Matthew Principle of the sociologist Robert K. Merton to the effect that fame attracts credit: that the tendency is for the well-known to be recognized while the obscure are allowed to remain in obscurity. And there is also the Law of Eponomy of the economist Stephen M. Stigler which has it—with only mild exaggeration—that "No scientific discovery is named after its original discoverer."[27] However, such empirical observations, interesting though they are, do not concern us here. The present deliberations abstract from the sociological question of how credit for discoveries is allocated in actual practice to focus upon the ethical question of proper allocation—of how such credit *ought* in theory to be allocated. It is the issue not of *possession* but of *desert* that will preoccupy us here.

Just why does this issue of credit for discoveries matter—what is it that does (or should!) turn on this? For living researches primarily two things: enlarged *opportunities* (especially for such benefits

as research support and career advancement) and enhanced *recognition* (in particular by way of prizes, honorary degrees, academy memberships, and similar accolades). And there's even something in it for the dead as well, since credit for achievements is one way—and ideally the best way!—to gain a place in the history books. And so for theoretical and practical reasons alike we should and generally do want to reward achievement in matters of discovery, and it is by granting credit that we begin the process of assessing achievement here.

One possible misunderstanding must be averted from the start. The focus of present concern is with strictly *epistemic* credit for discovery. The pivotal question is that of actually making the discovery. Other subsidiary issues such as "Was it made by good means or bad?" "What was done with it once made?" and "Is the sort of person who made it someone admirable or detestable?" are all beside the point of present concern.

Consider an illustration. We have all heard of Hodgkin's disease, of Alzheimer's disease, of Down's Syndrome. Less widely known is Reiter's syndrome consisting of urethritis, which usually comes first, followed by arthritis and conjunctivitis. Occurring mainly in young men it is generally associated with the organism Chlamydia, and is named after the German physician Hans Conrad Julius Reiter (1881-1969) who identified it while an army physician in World War I. There is some discussion about its having been identified earlier, but this is beside the point of the present push to rename the syndrome and de-credit Reiter on account of his later activities as a Nazi and a concentration camp doctor. The question that people urge is "Should a war criminal be rewarded with an eponymous distinction?"[28] However, this sort of question, however, interesting, is *not* what is on the agenda here. Our concern is solely with the epistemic question of who is to be acknowledged as a discoverer, and not with the social-policy question of how the envisioning society is to respond by way of reward or penalty.

All of this said, the problem now before us is thus: When a group of investigators makes a discovery, how ought credit for the cognitive contribution at issue be divided among them?

"Very carefully" had best be our immediate response here for there are a great many complex issues that have to be taken into account.

First off there is, of course, the preliminary matter of how much credit there it to go around. Discoveries come in different sizes: large, medium, and small.[29] In fact, they have rather different dimensions of merit, since they can be interesting or uninteresting, important or unimportant, useful or useless, easy or difficult. Since our intent is here focussed

on the cognitive dimension, it is *importance* and *difficulty* that will be at the forefront of concern.

After all, interest as such is almost unavoidably subjective: it hinges on what people happen to *find* interesting. And utility can be either theoretical or applied. Practical utility is a matter of applied science or technology and as such addresses other than strictly epistemic issues. Theoretical utility, by contrast, comes down to facilitating the acquisition of knowledge pure and simple. And just this is pivotal for determining importance. For importance is best described by a double recursion: A discovery is cognitively important in a given branch of inquiry if the information it provides: (1) sheds light on one of the big issues definitive issues of the branch of inquiry; or (2) bears illuminatingly on an important finding; or (3) facilitates access to an important discovery. This complex formula provides what is, in effect, a (dually) recursive definition of importance.[30] Thus, for example, since medicine is clearly a significant domain of inquiry, and since information regarding the maintenance of health is its definitive object, a discovery is important when (1) it sheds light on this, or (2) it illuminates something else which itself does so at some iterative remove, or (3) it facilitates the realization of something which does so at some iterative remove.

As regards that starter set of important questions, it should be observed that "importance" of a question turns on the extent to the transformation that its answer effects within the domain of inquiry at issue. But two very different sorts of things can be in view here, either a mere growth or *expansion* of the relevant body of knowledge, of a *revision* of it that involves replacing some of its members by contraries thereof and readjusting the remainder to restore over-all consistency. This second sort of change in a body of knowledge (*revision*-change rather than mere *augmentation*-change) is in general the more significant mode, and a question whose resolution forces *this* sort of change is virtually bound to be of greater importance or significance than a question which merely fills in some of the *terra incognita* of our knowledge.

Importance is accordingly something comparative. And its assessment as greater or lesser will depend. As regards item (1) it depends on the amount of light that is shed, and as regards items (2) and (3) it will depend on the length of the induction chain that ultimately grounds it in (1) relating matters. It is a complex and challenging issue to work out the details for assessing importance but this is not the place or time to do so. For present purposes we have to suppose that the reader can recognize an impor-

tant discovery as such when it comes to view. So much, then, for importance. Let us return to the issue of assessing credit in matters of discovery.

2. PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSING EPISTEMIC CREDIT

The cardinal principles at issue in assessing the epistemic credit of individual discoveries are relatively straightforward. For this issue is something that depends primarily on two factors:

1. the inherent significance—that is, the importance—of the finding in question,

2. the difficulty of arriving at this finding issue.

As we have seen, importance is a matter of illumination—of helping to shed light on significant issues. Difficulty, by contrast, is a matter of how much effort and resources must be expected for solving the problem or making the discovery at issue. The expenditure of talent, time, and resources is the crux. And it should be clear that the question here is not that of how much effort an investigation has actually expended. For those investigators might well have expected for more than necessary and reached an easy goal by a roundabout path. Difficulty is a matter of how much effort *needs* to be expended for arriving at the result.

However, in assessing credit the weight of both these two factors—importance and difficulty—is uneven. For while both count, importance is very much the weightier factor here. A lot of credit goes to making an important discovery even when its realization was rather easy. And very little credit goes to a trivially important discovery even when its realization was difficult. But an important discovery that was difficult to realize gets extra points. As this perspective shows, epistemic credit for discoveries is a fundamentally normative conception that hinges on the factual matter of the nature of the contribution and the mode of its achievement.

And with multilaterally collaborative/cooperative discoveries, these two factors of importance and difficulty still remain pivotal. Between them they determine "how much credit there is to go around," so to speak, and before slicing the pie we must determine its size. However, some further important preliminaries must still be dealt with prior to addressing the issue of allocation.

As such a perspective indicates, credit for scientific discovery depends simply on the result achieved and the difficulty of achieving it. The agent's intent and expectations do not matter. Fleming was not looking for penicillin; Becquerel was not looking for radioactivity. But with epistemic credit for discovery it is results that matter and intentions are irrelevant.

And this is particularly important where multilateral efforts are involved. For in general there is no such thing as a group intention or a group expectation. And in fact group members generally ride off in various directions here. Nevertheless credit is there for the group: what they collectively discover they collectively get epistemic credit for without reference to intentions.

3. DISTRIBUTIVE VS COLLECTIVE COOPERATION

One further preliminary must also be addressed. For there are two very different sorts of multilaterally cooperative investigations since problem-solving effort can proceed either collectively or distributively. At this point the focus shifts to *given* discoveries and the question shifts from "How much credit is there to be divided overall?" to: "How is the available credit—but small or large—to be divided among those who participate in the process of discovery?"

It is helpful to introduce a bit of terminological regimentation at this point. For it is useful to distinguish between *distributive cooperation*, which is simply coordinated effort towards the realization of a common goal, and actual *collaboration* or *collective cooperation* which is a matter of working together with interactive feedback towards such a goal. The term cooperation will accordingly serve as a broader umbrella to cover both of these cases.

Distributive problem solving occurs when problems are disassembled into separate components that are addressed separately—often by distinct investigators. With such cooperation the overall problem is divided into component sub-problems subject to a division of labor. Perhaps because variant specialties are at issue, each investigator (or investigative group) does its work separately and their efforts, though coordinated, are disjoint, with different contributors providing different pieces of the whole. Thus with the lexicographic problem of explaining the orthography and meaning of English words we may have a research mode where investigator No 1 may take on the *A*'s, investigator No. 2 the *B*'s, and so on. Or in a

decoding effort, for example, one investigate works on verbs and adverbs another on nouns and adjectives, another on particles, etc.

A very different situation obtains when cooperative problem solving proceeds collectively and collaboratively. Here there is not just cooperation but actual teamwork or collaboration with different operators fusing their efforts in conjoint interaction. Collaborative work on a crossword puzzle is a good example. As anyone who has tried it knows, the relationship of feedback interaction renders this something far more effective than simply compiling the results of different individuals working separately. Problem solving here proceeds interactively with the efforts of different contributors intertconnectedly intertwined with that of others.

Of course what matters most with distributive credit for a discovery is actually making it. Consider a schematic example. Let us suppose that the situation before us is a search process for a particular problem-resolution that is emplaced within an overall solution space having the structure of a tic-tac-toe grid that maps out the range of possibilities:

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

Now suppose a situation where two investigators *X* and *Y* work in an independent but coordinated way. Investigator *X* locates the solution in the first row, and *Y* locates it in the middle column. Between them they have solved the problem by identifying 2 as the solution. Each has eliminated six possibilities and the work they have done accordingly is (so we may suppose) equally laborious. They will thus divide the credit 50:50.

But now suppose that *Y*'s work had, like *X*'s, *also* located the solution in the first row. Then of course the problem would remain unresolved: there would have been no discovery to be credited. To be sure, the useful work done by *X* and *Y* yield some credit for each of them, namely credit for their respective (identical) finding, but no credit for the actual discovery of a solution. But now note that, as far as what *X* does is concerned, there is no discernible difference between the two cases. Whether or not there is discovery—and therefore whether or not any credit for discovery is to be available—depends not on what those investigators individually do, but depends holistically on the overall relationship of their respective contribu-

tions. This schematic little example is thus instructive because it makes it transparently clear that what matters for collective discovery is not just individual effort or even identical contributions but the overall result.

There are, of course, some problems that cannot be factored into pieces. Such systemic problems as, for example, explaining the origins of World War I must be dealt with holistically: it makes no sense to address the historical, political, colonial, social, military, naval and economic aspects of the problem in separation. By their very nature as such, these holistic problems must be treated as a unit. They cannot be disassembled into bits and pieces. Here multilevel cooperation has of necessity to take the form of teamwork.[31]

4. PRINCIPLES OF CREDIT ALLOCATION

With these preliminary clarifications in view we can finally turn to our main task. For the fundamental principles of credit allocation for discoveries are now readily discerned. They are principally two:

1. When a group finding stems from *collective* cooperation, credit cannot be allocated differentially. It belongs to the group members indivisibly, collectively, and equally: they all share and share alike with respect to the aggregate outcome. They are, to speak in legal terminology, *tenants in common* of the discovery at issue.[32] In fact it would be inappropriate here to distribute partial credit to the individual investigators because in the conditions ex hypothesi at issue there is not practicable way of doing so. Credit for genuinely collaborative teamwork is effectively indivisible and belongs to the group-as-a-whole and to individuals only as members thereof. However—

2. When a group finding stems from *distributive* cooperation (in which case is must of course address a factorable problem), then the individual contributors simply gets the credit that goes with their piece (or pieces) of the problem. Here the whole is equal to the sum of its parts and the parts get evaluated separately as making so much percentage of the whole.

But what of the organizer of a multilateral research effort? Does this individual not deserve much of the credit? Surely so. For what we usually have here is simply a divisible effort with one individual or group provid-

ing the planning and organization of the research and another group carrying out the work. This being so, the overall process of problem-solving is divisible into two sectors: devising the plan and then carrying it out. And then each party gets credit for its own contribution: the organizers for the organization, the implementers for their implementation. Neither party deserves credit for the contribution of the other: the organizers get a lion's share of credit for the conceptual design of the inquiry, the implementers get the residual credit for whatever accomplishments are invested in the execution of the plan. And, of course, when the organizers also function as active investigators and are themselves members of the research team, then they deserve whatever additional credit goes with the discharge of this role.

In sum, with collective collaboration the credit for discovery will also have to be collective, while with distributive collaboration it will have to be distributive by shares. The mode of problem-solving collaboration dictates the mode of credit-allocation that is appropriate. And, in particular, while there may be much credit in the results of an inquiry that proceeds by way of the division of labor inherent in a distributive collaboration, nevertheless the contributors can here claim credit only for the particular finding that is their personal contribution.[33]

For the sake of a schematic example, consider once more the search for a problem-resolution emplaced within an overall solution space that has the structure of a tic-tac-toe grid:

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

In situations of this generic structure we generally have a problem that is factorable. And we may again suppose that our two investigators *X* and *Y* work separately. Now let it be that investigator *X* determines that the solution must lie on a diagonal. And investigator *Y* determines that it must lie in the middle row. Between the two they accordingly fix it in the middle. They have solved the problem and between the two they get credit for the whole. But each gets credit only for the particular piece—the particular sub-problem resolved by himself. And so, overall the credit is now divided as follows. *X* eliminates 4 possibilities (and thus 4/9 of the whole spectrum) while *Y* eliminates 6 possibilities (and thus 6/9 of the whole spec-

trum). Thus *Y* makes a contribution half again as large as *X*'s. (Of course this assumes that all else is equal, which is assuming a lot.)

With collective contributions, by contrast, where interactive teamwork is at stake, the credit cannot be divided. The group-as-a-whole will be the bearer of whatever credit there is. (In legal parlance, the contributors will own the credit in common and not by separable shares, the distinction being akin to that between a corporation and a partnership.)

Yet why not say that if there are *n*-interactive collaborators each simply gets one-*n*th of the credit? Because it makes no sense to so do. Participating with various others in teamwork leading to a great discovery is just not the same sort of thing as making one modest-size discovery on one's own. With genuine teamwork, credit for the collective achievement belongs substantially to the entire team—that is to everyone. To be sure, it is not that the discovery is to be credited *only* to the team and that individuals as such do not figure—that they deserve no personal recognition in the usual ways (raises, prizes, honorary degrees, etc.). It is, rather, that they deserve this as members of the team and that such good things should come to them all on a basis of equality ("all for one and one for all").[34] With teamwork credit belongs to the team as a whole and thereby to its individual members as members thereof: the credit is shared, but not divided.

5. FAIRNESS SUSTAINED

With distributive collaborations, credit for discoveries is thus comparatively unproblematic since contributions can be broken apart and credited to specific individuals. Here the classic principle of fair-share purportionism obtains, with credit being divided in line with individual claims. However, with collective credit for solving nonfactorable problems the situation is more complex. Here there is no proportioning of shares. Nevertheless, the classic principle of proportionality/fairness is not actually violated. For *here there actually are no competing individual claims*. With collective collaboration, claims have to be made in the first instance on behalf of the group-as-a-whole and credit then allocated to individuals as members thereof. The claim of each individual participant is simply that of having functioned as an integral and essential member of the entire team. And the credit he gets is a matter of shining as a moon reflecting the bright sunlight of collective achievement.

Accordingly, it needs to be stressed that the special situation of teamwork in discovery does *not* violate the classic fairness/proportionality principle of traditional distributive justice that allocations be made in accordance with claims. And the reason for this rejection of proportionality lies in the way in which claims work in this domain—namely, that with authentically collaborative teamwork there simply are no partitive and separately distributed claims.

But how is this difference in the groundrules for credit allocation, as between distributive and collective collaboration (teamwork) to be explained? The rationale at issue is clearly functional and pragmatic. In cases of the division of labor we want to provide each party with the strongest possible incentive for doing their individual part competently and efficiently. And so it makes good sense to give them full credit for their own contribution and thereby not to grant them any share in somebody else's. With teamwork, however, the interests of functional efficiency point in a different direction. Treating the team as an integral unit—with achievement and failure belonging to the whole—creates conditions where the coordinated efforts of the group are powerfully motivated in the pursuit of a shared objective. Effectiveness in working together is the crux so that here efficiency and effectiveness is maximized by giving that unifying goal priority over the particular individual contributions of the various collaborators. In sum, the difference in distributive procedure roots in the different goal structures of the respective modes of investigative procedure. The efficacy of different procedures in realizing different sorts of objectives is the key.

This state of affairs has important ramifications.

6. MORAL VS EPISTEMIC CREDIT: A DIFFERENCE OF AIMS

Those fundamental principles of credit allocation with discoveries may seem straightforward, but in particular cases the overall situation can be quite complex. For example, consider once more a problem-resolution space with the configuration of a tic-tac-toe grid. And again suppose that we have two investigators *X* and *Y* working separately in noncollaborative cooperation. And now let it be that *X* determines that the solution lies in column three. But *Y* cheats. He claims to have shown that the solution must lie in boxes 2 or 3, whereas actually all that he is entitled to claim on the basis of the information he has developed is that it lies somewhere in the first row.

Note that:

1. Between the two of them they have solved the problem: as a group they get full marks.

2. As far as individual epistemic credit goes, their shares are equal. By hypothesis each has succeeded in eliminating six possibilities.

3. However, as far as ethical or moral credit goes the inquiry as a whole is contaminated by *Y*'s cheating.

4. Nevertheless, from the ethical point of view *X* is altogether blameless: he is innocent as the driven snow. And so—

5. *Y* must bear the entire burden of ethical discredit.

6. Yet all the same *Y*'s moral culpability and cheating in fact nowise afflicts or contaminates the problem resolution collaboratively arrived at. Nor does it abolish *Y*'s *epistemic* credit for his contribution.

The example brings to light the very different modus operandi of moral and epistemic credit. The two types of credit function on entirely different principles. This issue deserves closer scrutiny.

To begin with, it is clear that markedly different policies and procedures are at issue with epistemic and moral credit. They have a different rationale, seeing that very different aims are at issue in the moral and the epistemic enterprises. With inquiry we want results: our epistemic concerns are product oriented. With morality, by contrast, we want good procedure: our moral concerns are process oriented: we want people to comport themselves properly. Pragmatically or functionally different enterprises are at issue. Moral credit is process driven: what people endeavor to do is paramount. By contrast, epistemic credit is product driven: the inherent value of findings is paramount.

Let us consider the matter in its goal-oriented perspective. Seen as a functional enterprise, the aim of morality lies in inculcating actions that safeguard the real interest of people by way of serving the best interest of the community. Morality seeks to canalize and direct the actions of people by guiding and goading them into doing what is right by way of assuring the general interest of the group. The crux is that process (what people do)

is paramount here with the issue of outcome (how things work out) pretty much irrelevant. General practices are paramount here. When you entrust your money to me, I am morally bound to return it to you when the time comes—even were I to believe or suspect that you will squander it or use it for an illicit purpose such as bribery.

Analogously, inquiry too is a functional enterprise. But it has a very different sort of goal-structure—one that prioritizes knowledge as such. For the discomfort of unknowing is a natural component of human sensibility. To be ignorant of what goes on about us is almost physically painful for us—no doubt because it is so dangerous from an evolutionary point of view. It is a situational imperative for us humans to acquire information about the world. The requirement for information, for cognitive orientation within our environment, is as pressing a human need as that for food itself. The basic human urge to understand—to make sense of things—is an integral and characteristic aspect of our make-up—we cannot live a satisfactory life in an environment we do not understand. For us intelligent creatures, cognitive orientation is itself a practical need: cognitive disorientation is physically stressful and distressing. And inquiry—the means by which we satisfy this need—is accordingly product driven. The advancement of knowledge is the paramount for the enterprise of inquiry.

As such a perspective shows, morality and inquiry are different enterprises with very different aims and purposes in view. Let us survey the lay of this land more closely.

7. HOW THE DIFFERENCE OF AIMS EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES AT WORK WITH MORAL AND WITH EPISTEMIC CREDIT

The difference between the goal-structure of the cognitive and of the moral enterprises provides the rationale—the explanatory basis—that accounts for the difference in the principles of credit allocation that are operative in these two domains. Thus consider:

1. *There unquestionably is such a thing as moral discredit; but strictly epistemic discredit does not exist.*

Moral credit is bi-polar. It has a positive side (praiseworthiness) and a negative side (blame). Epistemic credit is uni-polar: there is no discredit

here: there is no such thing as wicked knowledge. And the reason for the difference is simple. We want to bind people to the moral rules. But in the epistemic case we want to have people go their own way, take chances, run risks. Disincentives to innovation must be sidelined and general rules disregarded. Inquiry wants results. Ethics insists that like cases be handled alike. But not inquiry. Here uniformity is not at a premium. Quite the reverse. If group *A* pursues strategy #1, one would want group *B* to pursue strategy #2. We prize creativity, originality and innovation; we disapprove duplication of effort.

2. *Moral credit is always individual; epistemic credit need not be so, for while it is individual with distributive cooperation, it is collectivized and indivisible with teamwork.*

In point of moral credit (or discredit) individuals stand on their own feet. Strictly speaking in moral matters there is no group credit/discredit! the moral credit/discredit of groups is always that of the individuals that belong. But epistemic credit can belong to a group holistically and resist a distributive breakdown to individuals. And the rationale of this difference is straightforward. Where *individual effort* is paramount we want to maximize personal incentives. But where *interactive collaboration* counts we want to sink individual self-preoccupation in the interests of cooperation towards the common goal. And so from the angle of investigative teamwork we need a disincentive to "I'll keep my share, thank you" egoism as counterproductive to the enterprise.

With the *interactive collaboration* at issue in investigative teamwork it makes sense to sink individual self-preoccupation in the interests of cooperation towards the common goal. And so from the angle of investigative teamwork there is good reason for establishing a strong disincentive to the idea "I'll do my separate bit and will keep my separate share, thank you." But in moral matters individual action and inaction are the crux. So here, where *individual effort* is paramount, it is advantageous to maximize personal incentives. With individual responsibility credit must be treated on a strictly personal, individualized basis.

3. *With moral credit intention is paramount but with epistemic credit intention is immaterial since results are paramount.*

With moral credit/discredit intentions counts: from the moral point of view, intent is critical. The wicked nephew poisons rich Aunt Agatha's tea. In the last moment the clumsy chambermaid knocks it over, and a fresh, harmless cup of tea is produced in its place. Legally the nephew is, of course, guiltless, but morally he is guilty as sin. The drowning child cries for help. You plunge into the raging waters to save him. When you are on the verge of taking hold of the infant, a great wave comes along and sweeps you both onto the shore. Your brave and selfless actions had no effect. But from the moral point of view you are still a hero. From the angle of moral appraisal outcome is generally subordinate to intent.

But with epistemic credit the matter stand otherwise. Here accomplishment is all and intent stands irrelevantly on the sidelines. And the rationale is again straightforward. In the moral case, where what matters is canalizing the smooth interaction of individuals in the promotion of the common interest, we put paramount emphasis on process and therefore on motivation with respect to goals and intention. In the epistemic case where product is paramount; where purely epistemic credit is concerned, we do not care about intention; here product is pivotal.

4. *With moral credit inadvertence is credit-annihilative but with epistemic credit serendipity counts*

Doing the right thing unwittingly and by accident, gains you little if any moral credit, though as far as moral blame goes, this sort of thing helps to serve as exculpation. But things stand otherwise with epistemic credit. Accidental discoveries are still discoveries and deserve full marks as such.

Again, the difference clearly lies in the fact that with moral credit motivation and hence process is paramount, while with epistemic credit product is paramount. The different aims of the two enterprises are once more determinative.

Three paramount lessons emerge from such comparisons:

- Epistemology and morality are both normative enterprises, but they differ sharply in point of teleology. Their functional or purposive dimension is very different.

- In consequence of this, epistemic credit and moral credit work on very different principles.

- This difference of principles rests on the fact that a very different rationale is operative with respect to credit allocation in these two cases. Moral credit pivots on process and intention; epistemic credit on product and accomplishments.

There is, moreover, another significant point of difference between the moral and the epistemic situation. In the case of collaborative discovery only a fixed amount of credit is available—namely the value of the discovery at issue—and the participants share it altogether. But in the case of moral right- or wrong-doing, in specific, there is no fixed amount of discredit to be shared by the group as a whole. All the individuals concerned stand on their own footing, and each culprit, severally and individually, becomes saddled with the whole of the reprehension at issue. Thus if two miscreants join in deceiving or mistreating someone, each deserves blame for the whole of the misdeed: they do not divide it between them, nor would they each get half as much if there were twice as many. And the same holds for morally creditable actions as well.

In this sense, most credit and discredit is in fact reduplicative. Consider wrongdoing. With collaborative theft or murder each participant is a thief or murderer—from the moral standpoint at least. And for good reason. The policy at issue is designed to serve as a maximally effective deterrent. Collective misdeeds redound upon all alike in the case of moral transgression even as collective achievements redound upon all alike in cases of collaborative discovery. In the latter case we seek to maximize the incentives for action that is appropriate and in the former to maximize the incentives against action that is inappropriate.

8. THE REASON WHY

It is clear that in general markedly different policies and procedures are at issue with epistemic and moral credit. But why should this be?

The answer here lies in the fact that very different aims are at issue in the moral and the epistemic enterprises. With inquiry we want results: our epistemic concerns are result oriented— we want to advance the frontiers of knowledge. Product is paramount. Epistemic credit is achievement driven: the value of the findings that result is the decisive consideration. With morality, by contrast, we want good procedure: our moral concerns are process oriented—we want people to comport themselves properly and trust results to take care of themselves. Pragmatically or functionally dif-

ferent enterprises are at issue. Moral credit is process driven, so that here what people endeavor to do is the key factor.

Some significant lessons emerge from such comparisons: Epistemology and morality are both normative enterprises, but they differ sharply in point of teleology. Their functional or purposive dimension are markedly different, so that a very different rationale is operative with respect to credit allocation in these two cases. Moral credit pivots on process and intention; epistemic credit on product and accomplishments. And in consequence there arises a difference in distribution principle owing to the greater functional adequacy in point of effectiveness and efficiency in goal realization that these different principles are able to engender.

This goal-oriented perspective accordingly brings to light the rationales for the allocation process at issue. Seen as a functional enterprise, the aim of morality lies in inculcating actions benefit of the wider safeguard the real interest of people through serving the best interest of the community. Morality thus seeks to canalize and direct the actions of all the people concerned through guiding and goading them into doing what is right by way of assuring the general interest of the group to the advantage of all concerned. Accordingly, the mission of the moral project is to promulgate and instill in people those modes of action that coinduce to the general advantage through protecting the interests of people-in-general in contexts of interaction. Morality spells out the rules—the do's and (primarily) don'ts heed of which will facilitate the shaping of a community where people are not inappropriately disadvantaged through the agency of others. The crux is that process (what people do) is paramount for morality, with the issue of outcome (how things work out) as subsidiary and incidental since it lies largely outside the agent's control. In allocating moral credit and blame, praise or reprehension, intention thus become the pivotal factors—exactly as Kant emphasized long ago.

Of course the moral ideal is good results that issue from good intentions. But under subideal conditions the principles for allocating moral credit or blame prioritize intent and outcome is left to take care of itself. Morality accordingly prioritizes effort as comparatively manageable and under our control. (By contrast, outcome is hard and all too often lies beyond our powers.) Situations vary and outcomes are contingent and often lie outside the agent's effective control. People propose and the reality's course of events disposes. And it does so in all too often uncontrollable ways: outcome generally lies *extra vires*, beyond our power, but intention and effort—with its emphasis on what we are *trying* to do—lies within the

agent's control. Getting people to *try* to do the proper thing will generally optimize the chances of success. In sum, realizing the definitive goal of the moral enterprise is something that is better served by a policy that prioritizes intention and effort over outcome and performance.

By comparison, inquiry too is a functional enterprise. But it has a very different sort of goal-structure—one that prioritizes the achievement of knowledge. For the discomfort of unknowing is a natural component of human sensibility. To be ignorant of what goes on about us is almost physically painful for us—no doubt because it is so dangerous from an evolutionary point of view. It is a situational imperative for us humans to acquire information about the world. The requirement for information, for cognitive orientation within our environment, is as pressing a human need as that for food itself. The basic human urge to understand—to make sense of things—is an integral and characteristic aspect of our make-up—we cannot live a satisfying life in an environment we do not understand. For us intelligent creatures, cognitive orientation is itself a practical need: cognitive disorientation is physically stressful and distressing. And inquiry—the means by which we endeavor to satisfy this need—is accordingly product driven. The advancement of knowledge is the paramount task for the enterprise of inquiry. Here intent is irrelevant and achievement determinative.

9. A LOOK AT THE LAW

With the allocation of legal responsibility and culpability, we again come up against the fact that this enterprise has its own characteristic sort of goal structure. A comparison helps to illustrate this. Moral assessment pivots on what can reasonably be anticipated. People who drive their cars home from an office party in a thoroughly intoxicated condition, indifferent to the danger to themselves and heedless of the risks they are creating for others, are equally guilty in the eyes of *morality* (in contrast to *legality*) whether they kill someone along the way or not. Their transgression lies in the very fact of their playing Russian roulette with the lives of others. Whether they actually kill someone or not is simply a matter of chance, of accident and sheer statistical haphazard, of circumstances beyond their control, and therefore the moral negativity is much the same one way or the other—even as the moral positivity is much the same one way or the other for the person who bravely plunges into the water in an attempt to save a drowning child as the tide is drawing him out. Allocations of moral

responsibility prioritize intentions. But legal responsibility works very differently. For allocations of legal responsibility prioritize outcome. If a drunk driver is lucky and does not kill someone his legal offense goes no further than driving drunk.

How is this difference between the moral and the legal situation to be accounted for? Very simply in functional terms. The difference roots in the difference of the different teleology—the different aims and purposes—of the enterprises concerned. For the project of morality and the project of legality each has its own characteristic mission. And it is this functional, purposive, pragmatic difference that explains the difference in credit allocation.

10. THE PRIMACY OF PRAGMATISM

Against this background, it is not hard to see that the different allocation processes at issue with moral and epistemic credit inhere in a fundamentally *pragmatic* rationale. For it emerges that this difference in comportment can be explained on the basis of the efficiency and effectiveness of those different credit allocation rules in facilitating realization of the definitive goals of these two distinct enterprises.

And it is just here that methodological pragmatism comes into it. For such a pragmatism is a doctrine based on the idea that the rational legitimization of a practice or procedure or instrumentality lies in its effectiveness and efficiency at realizing the goals and purposes of the domain in which this practice or procedure or instrumentality has been instituted. And just this accomplishes the work that is needed in the present case.

This sort of approach clearly serves elsewhere as well. For example, we see it at work once more in the difference of modus operandi as between moral and legal culpability. Suppose *X*, *Y*, and *Z* collaborate on an armed bank robbery. *X* enters the premisses and does the stick-up work, *Y* acts as lookout, and *Z* drives the get-away car. The bank guard resists and *X* shoots him dead. From the moral point of view, *X* alone is a murderer—the moral culpability belongs to the agent. But from the legal point of view all are guilty of murder. And the rationale for this difference of course lies in the paramount goal of the legal enterprise in relation to preserving the fabric of the social order that enables people-in-general to go about their affairs safe and secure in matters of life, limb, and property.

In the end, then, it is *the pragmatics regarding the functional teleology of the enterprise* that both explains and validates those relevant princi-

ples of operation. Inquiry, morality, law, etc. represent particular sorts of human projects, each of which is characterized by a distinctive goal structure of ends, aims, and objectives of its own. And the cardinal rule of pragmatic rationality is the same throughout: "Proceed in a manner that is optimally efficient and effective in realizing the purposes at hand."[35] It is exactly this purposive dimension of the enterprise in which the modus operandi of its rules for allocating credit and/or reprehension will ultimately be rooted via considerations of effectiveness and efficiency in goal-realization. In this regard it is noteworthy and significant that a pragmatic, purpose-oriented approach can prove to be not only useful but necessary for understanding the ways of even those "higher" values at issue in the allocation of epistemic and moral credit.

Chapter 8

OPTIMALISM AND THE RATIONALITY OF THE REAL (ON THE PROSPECT OF AXIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION)

1. IS THE REAL RATIONAL?

From the standpoint of philosophy, two projects of paramount importance grow from roots embedded in natural science: the one descriptive and metaphysical, the other instructive and ethical.

The former project is that of a science-oriented ethic which pivots on the question: how must we humans comport ourselves—*how must we organize our modus operandi in the world*—in order to make scientific inquiry into the world's ways not only possible but effective, efficient, and fruitful? And in developing this project there would doubtless come to the forefront such virtues as diligence, truthfulness, comprehensiveness, trustworthiness, tolerance of different opinions, peaceful coexistence, amicable competition and the like, all of which are somewhere between necessary and highly decidable if scientific inquiry is to flourish. And underlying this matter of ethical comportment that facilitates science lies the question of *why* it is that we should do this. Why should we pursue the scientific project effectively? And here perhaps the most telling response is to insist that this is our destiny, the mission allotted to us in the cosmos in virtue of our status as intelligent beings. It is, to speak in Kantian terms, our cosmic duty, imposed upon us, to speak in Hegelian terms, by our place in a cosmos whose inherent impetus is to self-knowledge—to the realization of creatures at home in nature and able to achieve an intellectual grasp of it's workings. Ultimately, then, so one could argue, a science-oriented ethic inheres in a complex combination of Kantian dutifulness, Hegelian self-rationalization, and an Anthropic perspective that sees the emergence of intelligence as fundamental in the cosmos scheme of things.

However, the working out of this line of thought, interesting though it may be, is not going to be the focus of these present deliberations. Instead they will move in another direction—that of a science-oriented metaphysics. For parallel to the previously projected idea of a science-oriented ethic

there is also the prospect of a science-oriented metaphysic that pivots on the question: how must the reality comport itself—*how must its modus operandi be organized in the world*—to make scientific inquiry into the world's ways not only possible but effective, efficient, and fruitful? And in developing this project there would doubtless come to the forefront such factors as functional orderliness, regularity, simplicity, economy, and the like, all of which are somewhere between necessary and highly effective if scientific inquiry is to flourish. All in all, nature must operate in such a way as to be "user friendly" to intelligent inquiring beings if they are to be able to penetrate at least some of its salient secrets. The world, in sum, must combine two somewhat conflicting features. On the one hand it must be complex enough to allow the developmental—and presumably evolutionary—emergence of intelligently inquiring beings. And on the other hand it must be simple and cognitively tractable enough to reward the cognitive efforts of such beings with a significant degree of success.

But now as regards the orderly and lawful comportment requisite for the success of science there arises the question: Why believe this sort of thing to be so? Why should it be that nature turns out to be "user friendly" towards inquiring intelligences. Why should it be that the Real be Rational, to revert to Hegelian terminology once more? But perhaps this question is inappropriate and falls aside as essentially meaningless because it asks for something that is simply not to be has—a rationale for Reality's amenability to explanation.

But of course even in this event we are still entitled to ask for an explanation. How can it come about that Reality should fail to be rational?

How could we possibly give an account for Reality's failure to meet the demands of explanating reason?

2. REJECTIONISM

There really seems to be only one way to go forward here. And this is by way of a pathway opened up by Immanuel Kant that goes roughly as follows:

> The demand for a rationale that accounts for reality-as-a-while is a totalitarian demand. As such it is illegitimate. All explanations require inputs. Explanation always proceeds by explaining one thing in terms of something else. There thus is no way to explain Reality, to give an

account of everything-as-a-while. For this sort of thing would either evade a vitiating regress of a vicious circle.

This rejection of totalitarian explanation looks to be a promising—and to all visible appearance the *only* promising—basis for rejecting the inherently plausible demand for an explanation of Reality-at-large. But in fact it fails to achieve this result. For despite its insistence on the need for inputs, there indeed is an explanatory way forward.

To see this it is necessary to take a somewhat closer and critical look at the roadblock at issue—the principle that explanation can achieve adequacy only if it averts vitiating circularity by resorting to unexplained explainers.

The key to the problem is that questions on the order of "Why is there anything at all?" "Why are things in-general as they actually are?", and "Why is the law structure of the world as it is?" cannot be answered within the standard causal framework. For *causal* explanations de certainly need inputs: they are essentially *transformational* (rather than *formational* pure and simple). They can address themselves to specific issues distributively and seriatim, but not collectively and holistically. If we persist in posing the sorts of global questions at issue, we cannot hope to resolve them in orthodox causal terms.

Does this mean that such questions are inevitably improper? Must the entire question of obtaining the (or *a)* reason for the existence of things simply be dismissed as illegitimate. It is just a mistake to ask for a causal explanation of existence *per se;* that in the light of closer scrutiny the explanatory "problem" vanishes as meaningless.

In pursuing this idea, let us begin by considering if the question of existence might be invalidated by considerations whose roots lie deep in the conceptual nature of things. Consider the following discussion by C. G. Hempel:

> Why is there anything at all, rather than nothing? . . . But what kind of an answer could be appropriate? What seems to be wanted is an explanatory account which does not assume the existence of something or other. But such an account, I would submit, is a logical impossibility. For generally, the question "Why is it the case that *A?* is answered by "Because *B* is the case" . . . *[A]n answer to our riddle which made no assumptions about the existence of anything cannot possibly provide*

> *adequate grounds*. . . . The riddle has been constructed in a manner that makes an answer logically impossible. . .[36]

But this plausible line of argumentation has shortcomings. The most serious of these is that it fails to distinguish appropriately between the *existence of things* on the one hand and the *obtaining of facts* on the other,[37] and supplementarily also between specifically substantival facts regarding existing *things*, and nonsubstantival facts regarding *states of affairs* that are not dependent on the operation of preexisting things.

This principle is indeed right and proper with the domain of thing-descriptive facts. In this factual-descriptive domain of deliberation we must indeed explain some things in terms of others, with the explanation of effects in terms of their causes as the generally envisioned paradigm. No standard-made causal explanation of Reality-at-large in terms of the preexisting condition of things is possible.

But in the present, genuinely extra-ordinary case, another very different option stands before us. For here we can—and indeed should—shift the framework of explanation from the descriptive/factual to the normative/axiological order of explanation. But what would such an explanation look like?

3. METAPHYSICAL AXIOLOGY

From its earliest days, metaphysics has been understood also to include "axiology," the evaluative and normative assessment of the things that exist. And just here lies the doorway to another mode of explanation.

Already with Aristotle the aim of the metaphysical enterprise was as a venture not just to describe or characterize, but to *grade* (appraise, rank) matters in point of their inherent value. Such metaphysical evaluation has two cardinal features: (i) it is genuine evaluation that involves some authentic concept of greater or lesser value and (ii) the mode of value involved is *sui generis* and thus not ethical, aesthetic, utilitarian, etc. Accordingly, it evaluates types of *things or conditions of things existing in nature* (not acts or artifacts) with a view to their intrinsic merit (not simply their "value-*for*" man or anything else). The very possibility of this axiological enterprise accordingly rests on the acceptance of distinctly metaphysical values—as opposed to ethical (right/wrong) or aesthetic (beautiful/ugly) or practical (useful/unuseful) ones.

The paternity of evaluative metaphysics in philosophical practice can

unhesitatingly be laid at Plato's door, but as a conscious and deliberate philosophical method it can be ascribed to Aristotle. In the *Physics* and the *De Anima* we find him at work not merely at classifying the kinds of things there are in the world, but in ranking and grading them in terms of relative evaluations. Above all, his preoccupation in the *Metaphysics* with the ranking schematism of prior/posterior—for which see especially chap. 11 of Bk. 5 (Delta), and chap. 8 of Bk. 9 (Theta)—is indicative of Aristotle's far-reaching concern with the evaluative dimension of metaphysical inquiry.[38] It was thus a sound insight into the thought-framework of the great Stagirite that led the anti-Aristotelian writers of the Renaissance, and later preeminently Descartes and Spinoza, to attack the Platonic/Aristotelian conception of the embodiment of value in natural and the modern logical positivist opponents of metaphysics to attach the stigma of illegitimacy to all evaluative disciplines. Nevertheless, despite such attacks, evaluative metaphysics has continued as an ongoing part of the Western philosophical tradition as continued by such thinkers as Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Whitehead, all of whom envision will-systems where some things have greater value than others.

A prime example of this methodological approach in recent philosophy is G. E, Moore's *Principia Ethica*.[39] For Moore taught that the realm of *ethical* values is not self-contained but rather roots in a manifold of *metaphysical* values. His celebrated "method of absolute isolation" invites us to make comparative evaluations of two hypothetical worlds supposed to be alike in all relevant respects except that in one of them some factor is exhibited which is lacking in the other. Thus Moore argues for the intrinsic value of natural beauty (i.e, its value even apart from human contemplation) by the argument:

> [A hypothetical] beautiful world would be better still, if there were human beings in it to contemplate and enjoy its beauty. But that admission makes nothing against my point. If it be once admitted that the beautiful world in itself is better than the ugly, then it follows, that however many beings may enjoy it, and however much better their enjoyment may be than it is itself, yet its mere existence adds something to the goodness of the whole: it is not only a means to our end, but also itself a part thereof. (*Op. cit.*, §50)

To espouse the project of evaluative metaphysics is thus to give Moore the right as against Henry Sidgwick's thesis that: "If we consider carefully

such permanent results as are commonly judged to be good, other than qualities of human beings, we find nothing that, on reflection, appears to possess this quality of goodness out of relation to human existence, or at least to some [presumably animal] consciousness or feeling."[40] (There is of course the trivial fact if "we" do the considering, "we" do the evaluating. The point to be borne in mind is that this need not be done from a humanly parochial let alone an idiosyncratically personal, and "subjective" standpoint.) Sidgwick to the contrary notwithstanding, man is neither the measure nor necessarily even the measurer of all things in the evaluative domain.

Moore was well aware of the salient difference which, despite some kinship, obtains between standard ethics on the one hand and evaluative metaphysics on the other, recognizing the *sui generis* character of the latter enterprise:

> By combining the results of Ethics as to what would be good or bad, with the conclusions of metaphysics, as to what kinds of things there are in the Universe, we get a means of answering the question whether the Universe is, on the whole, good or bad, and how good or bad, compared with what it might be: a sort of question which has in fact been much discussed by many philosophers.[41]

Such an axiological position does not (as with Sidgwick) see metaphysical evaluation as rooted in ethics but insists on the very reverse relationship. For if the ethical imperative to "Maximize value!" is indeed a metaphysically grounded maxim of impersonal rationality, and ethical conduct is, by its very nature, appropriate on account of its having greater value than its contraries, then ethics itself will ultimately be predicated upon evaluative metaphysics.

In the present discussion, however, it will not be ethics that concerns us but ontology, and the present deliberations will accordingly focus on exploring the role of value in the explanation of existence. The governing idea is to consider the prospect of giving a Leibnizian answer to that Leibnizian question, contemplating the prospect that things exist—and exist as they do—because that is for the best. Can such an optimalism be developed in a way that is at all plausible?

Accustomed as we are to explanations in the mode of efficient causality, the idea of an axiological explanation of existence on the basis of an evaluative optimalism has a somewhat strange and unfamiliar air about it.

Let us consider more closely how it is supposed to work.

The approach rests on adopting what might be called an *axiogenetic optimality principle* to the effect that value represents a decisive advantage in regard to realization in that in the virtual competition for existence among alternatives it is the comparatively best that is bound to prevail.[42] Accordingly, whenever there is a plurality of alternative possibilities competing for realization in point of truth or of existence the (or an) optimal possibility wins out. (An alternative is *optimal* when no better one exists, although it can have equals.) The result is that things exist, and exist as they do, because this is for the (metaphysically) best.

It may be a complicated matter to appraise from a metaphysical/ontological standpoint that condition *X* is better (inherently more meritorious) than condition *Y*. But, so optimalism maintains, once this evaluative hurdle is overcome the question "Why should it be that *X* rather than *Y* exists?" is automatically settled by this very fact via the ramifications of optimality. In sum, a Law of Optimality prevails; value (of a suitable—as yet unspecified—sort) enjoys an existential impetus so that it lies in the nature of things that (one of) the best of available alternatives is realized.[43]

Ontological optimalism is closely related to optimism. The optimist holds that "Whatever exists is for the best," the optimalist maintains the converse that "Whatever is for the best exists." But at least when we are dealing with exclusive and exhaustive alternatives the two theses come to much the same thing. For if one of the alternatives A, A_1, . . . A_n must be the case, then if what is realized is for the best it follows automatically that the best is realized.

Optimalism is certainly a *teleological* theory: it holds that reality's modus operandi manifests a tropism towards a certain end or *telos* to wit optimization. The upshot represents a doctrine of "final causes" in Aristotle's sense. But this axiology is emphatically not a causal theory in the nowadays standard sense of efficient causation. It does not—and does not need to—regard value as a somehow efficient cause, a productive agency. On the contrary—value is not *productive* at all, but merely *eliminative* in so functioning as to block the way to availability of inferior productions. It does not drive causal processes but only canalizes or delimits them by ruling certain theoretical (or logical) possibilities out of the realm of real possibility. Consider an analogy. The English language allows double letters in its words, but not triple letters. But that doesn't mean that the double *S* of "pussy" *causes* that ss-successive letter to be something different from *S*. The principle explains without causality. It merely imposes a structural

constraint of possibility. The lawful principle at issue explains the factual situation without any invocation of causality, seeing that an explanation via inherent constraints on possibility is not a causal explanation at all.

It is a deeply mistaken idea that values somehow actively productive agents. Now when laws obtain, there is, no doubt, a *reason* for their obtaining (an axiological reason, as we ourselves see it). But this reason can presumably be provided by an explanatory principle that need not carry us into the order of *efficient* causality.

Optimalism readily concedes that value does not engender existence in the mode of efficient causations and that it would indeed be rather mysterious if values were asked to play a *causal* role in regard to laws. But this is to be seen as irrelevant. The real point is that while value does not efficiently *cause* existence it nevertheless *explains* it, exactly because causal explanation is not the only sort of explanation there is. Accordingly, the objection *wrongly* supposes that causality is something that is required for law-explanation—and thus assumed by axiological explanation. The complaint "How can values possibly operate causally?!" simply confuses axiological explanation with productively efficient explanation. Laws don't have causes—and don't need them. It would be inappropriate to ask for their explanation in the order of efficient causation. And so the fact that axiology does not provide such an explanation is not an occasion for appropriate complaint. It does not stop value explanations from being explanations. They present perfectly good answers to "Why is something-or-other so?" type questions. It is just that in relation to laws, values play only an *explanatory* role though possibility elimination and not a causally *productive* role though actual creation. And this is no defect because a productive process is simply not called for.

The crux of it, then, is that Law of Optimality does not function causally at all—its modus operandi involves the exigency of principle not the productivity of causes. Now when laws obtain, there is, no doubt, a *reason* for their obtaining (an axiological reason, as we ourselves see it). But this reason can presumably be provided by an explanatory principle that need not carry us into the order of *efficient* causality at all. To ask for an engendering cause is to resort to the problematic idea that all reasons must always be grounded in the productive agency of thing—that the laws hold as they do because some producer function as it does (e.g., because God instituted them in that particular way). But this is simply a mistaken idea. Only the explanations of why physical objects and events exist need we involve causes and effects. But laws of nature themselves do not "exist" as

constituents of the physical realm—they just *obtain*. Being neither things nor events, they neither have causes, not constitute causes (the causally operative items on the world's stage are the things and events which "obey" the laws). To inquire into how values operate causally in law-realization is simply to adopt an inappropriate model for the processes involved. Value explanation just is not causal: values do not function in the order of efficient causality at all.

4. WHY OPTIMALISM?

"But why should it be that optimalism obtains? Why should what is for the best exist? What sort of plausible argument can be given on this position's behalf?" And what is to be the status of a Law of Optimality to the effect that "whatever possibility is for the best is ipso facto the possibility that is actualized." It is certainly not a logico-conceptually *necessary* truth; from the angle of theoretical logic it has to be seen as a contingent fact—albeit one not about nature as such, but rather one about the manifold of *real* possibility that underlies it. Insofar as necessary at all it obtains as a matter of ontological rather than logico-conceptual necessity, while the realm of possibility as a whole is presumably constituted by considerations of logico-metaphysical necessity alone.[44] But the division of this realm into real vs. merely speculative possibilities can hinge on contingent considerations: there can be logically contingent laws of possibility even as there are logically contingent laws of nature (i.e., of reality). "But if it is contingent then surely it must itself rest on some further explanation." Granted. It itself presumably has an explanation, seeing that one can and should maintain the Leibnizian Principle of Sufficient Reason to the effect that for every contingent fact there is a reason why it is so rather than otherwise. But there is no decisive reason why that explanation has to be "deeper and different"—that is, no decisive reason why the prospect of *self-explanation* has to be excluded at this fundamental level.[45] After all, we cannot go on putting the explanatory elephant on the back of the tortoise on the back of the alligator ad infinitum: as Aristotle already saw, the explanatory regress has to stop somewhere at the "final" theory—one that is literally "self-explanatory." And what better candidate could there be than the Law of Optimality itself with the result that the divisions between real and merely theoretical possibilities is as it is (i.e., value based) because that itself is for the best?[46]

The self-explanatory nature of the principle betokens the fact that to ask

for a different sort of explanation would be inappropriate. We must expect that any ultimate principle should explain itself and cannot, in the very nature of things, admit of an external explanation in terms of something altogether different. And the impetus to realization inherent in authentic value lies in the very nature of value itself. A rational person would not favor the inferior alternative; and there is no reason to think that a rational reality would do so either.

To be sure, could one ask "But why should it be that reality is rational?" But this is a problematic proceeding. For to ask this question is to ask for a reason. It is *already* to presume or presuppose the rationality of things, taking the stance that what is so is and must be so for a reason. Once one poses the question "But why should it be that nature has the feature *F*?" it is already too late to raise the issue of nature's rationality. In advancing that question the matter at issue has already been tacitly conceded. Anyone who troubles to ask for a reason why nature should have a certain feature is thereby proceeding within a framework of thought where nature's rationality—the amenability of its features to rational explanation—is already presumed.

Yet what is to be the status of a Law of Optimality to the effect that "whatever possibility is for the best is ipso facto the possibility that is actualized." It is certainly not a logico-conceptually *necessary* truth; from the angle of theoretical logic it has to be seen as a contingent fact—albeit one not about nature as such, but rather one about the manifold of *real* possibility that underlies it. Insofar as necessary at all it obtains as a matter of ontological rather than logico-conceptual necessity, while the realm of possibility as a whole is presumably constituted by considerations of logico-metaphysical necessity alone.[47] But the division of this realm into real and authentic vs. merely speculative possibilities can hinge on contingent considerations: there can be logically contingent laws of possibility even as there are logically contingent laws of nature (i.e., of reality). "But if it is contingent then surely it must itself rest on some further explanation." Granted. It itself presumably has an explanation, seeing that one can and should maintain the Leibnizian Principle of Sufficient Reason to the effect that for every contingent fact there is a reason why it is so rather than otherwise. But there is no decisive reason why that explanation has to be "deeper and different"—that is, no decisive reason why the prospect of *self-explanation* has to be excluded at this fundamental level.[48] After all, we cannot go on putting the explanatory elephant on the back of the tortoise on the back of the alligator ad infinitum: as Aristotle already saw,

the explanatory regress has to stop somewhere at a "final" theory—one that is literally "self-explanatory".

And what better candidate could there be than the Law of Optimality itself with the result that the division between real and merely theoretical possibilities is as it is (i.e., value based) because that itself is for the best? The Leibniz reminiscent reasoning at issue proceeds as follows:

- The prevailing world order is the best that *can* be actualized—i.e., the best that it is possible to realize.

- The best possible order exists because this is for the best.

Therefore: The prevailing world order exists.

What is self-explanatory here is not the existence of the world (whose explanation after all proceeds from this entire account). It is, rather, the principle of optimality reflected in the second premiss that is self-explanatory—the fact that the best possible order exists. For this fact is part and parcel of the optimal order whose obtaining it validates. The principle being, as it were, self-explanatory. And to ask for a different sort of explanation would be inappropriate. We must expect that any ultimate principle must explain itself and cannot, in the very nature of things, admit of an external explanation in terms of something altogether different. The impetus to realization inherent in authentic value lies in the very nature of value itself. A rational person would not favor the inferior alternative; and a rational reality cannot do so either.

To be sure, the law's operation here presupposes a manifold of suitable value parameters, invoking certain physically relevant features (symmetry, economy, regularity, or the like) as merit-manifesting factors. The optimization at issue is—and should be—geared to a "scientifically reputable" theory of some suitable kind, coordinate with a complex of physically relevant factors of a suitable kind. After all, many a possible world will maximize a "value" of *some* sort (confusion and nastiness included). It is its (presumed) gearing to a positive value which like economy or elegance is plausibly identifiable as physically relevant—contingently identifiable as such subject to scientific inquiry—that establishes optimalism as a reasonable proposition and ultimately prevents the thesis "optimalism obtains because that's for the best" from declining into vacuity.

5. IS OPTIMALISM THEOCENTRIC?

"Yet what if one is sceptical about theism? Would one then not have to reject optimalism?" Here the optimalist replies: "Not at all. Optimalism does not require theism—it need not call upon God to institute optimalism. The doctrine is perfectly self-supportive: it obtains on its own basis, because that's for the best."[49]

In taking the axiological route, one is not saying that the realization of value is reality's purpose. We need not *personify* nature to account for its features. To say that nature embodies value is a very far cry from saying that the realization of value is one of its purposes. That reality operates in a certain manner—that its modus operandi follows certain laws or principles—is in general an entirely impersonal thesis. *The values involved in axiological explanation need not be SOMEBODY'S values*. No element of *personification*, no reference to anyone's aims of purposes, need be involved in axiological explanation. Purpose, on the other hand, necessarily requires a purposer—it must be *somebody's* purpose. In this regard, value stands with order rather than with purpose. Order "seeking" in nature does not presuppose an orderer, nor value "seeking" a valuer. The maintenance of enhancement of a value can be a matter of "blind" operation of impersonal optimific forces.

For the fact of it is that optimalism does not require a creator to provide for the productive efficacy of value. The insistence upon the need for a productive agency is based on the mistaken idea requiring an explanation in the mode of *efficient causality*.

A word of caution at this point. One of the prime motives for taking axiological explanation seriously is that it enables us to avert the temptations and difficulties of theological explanation. But the rationale for this is not an *odium theologicum*—an aversion to theological considerations as such. It is rather the idea of the medieval dictum *non in philosophia resurrence est add deum*—that we should not ask God to pull our philosophical chestnuts out of the fire.[50] Questions like "Why is there anything at all?" are *philosophical* questions and they ought ideally to be answered by *philosophical* means.

On the other hand, it must be stressed that axiological explanation is altogether congenial theism—even though they do not require it. After all it is only to be expected that if the world is created by a God of a sort that the tradition encourages us to accept, then the world that such a God creates should be one in which values play a role. And so it would seem that the-

ism requires axiological explanation distinctly more than axiological explanation requires theism.

6. IS OPTIMALISM PURPOSIVE?

Let us return to the idea of purposiveness and consider the objection "It is only by constituting the motives of agents that wishes can obtain explanatory efficacy. Only by serving as some deliberate agent's motivational repertoire can a value come into effective operation." Such a view of value-explanation is nothing new: it has existed in embryo since Plato's day thanks to his conception of demiurge. The basic idea is that the only way in which values can be brought to bear in the explanation of phenomena is through the mediation of a creative agent. Accordingly, thinkers from classical antiquity onwards, have defended (or attacked) the principle that explaining the presence of order in nature—the fact that the world is a cosmos—requires postulating a creative intelligence as its cause. That nature manifests and exemplifies such cognitive values as order, harmony, uniformity was thus explained by regarding these as marks of purpose. On this basis, the mainstream of Western thought regarding axiological explanation has taken the line that there is a super-natural agent (God, demiurge, cosmic spirit) and the values obtain their explanatory bearing by influencing the state of mind which governs his creative endeavors. This essentially *purposive* approach characterizes the traditional "argument from design," which explains the creation with reference to a creator (as its *ratio essendi*) and infers the existence of this creator from the orderly structure of created nature (as his *ratio cognoscendi*).[51] The sequential explanatory slide from design to value to purpose to intelligence was historically seen as inexorable. And so the idea of a recourse to an explanatory principle that is geared to values without any such mediation represents a radical departure. The guiding conception of the present deliberations—that value is the natural place to sever this chain—reflects a break with a longstanding tradition.

However, the justification of this break with the tradition of design explanation lies in observing the important distinction between values and purposes. Granted, a purpose must be *somebody's* purpose: it must have some intelligent agent as its owner-operator. It lies in the very nature of the concept that purposes cannot exist in splendid isolation; they must, in the final analysis, belong to some agent or other. For purposes as such, to be is to be adopted. Purposive explanations operate in terms of why con-

scious agent do things, and not ones of why impersonal conditions obtain.

A value, however, can be altogether impersonal. And this means that value explanation is not necessarily purposive. Being a value does not require that somebody actually values it (any more than being a fact requires that somebody actually realizes it). A person can certainly hold a certain value dear but if it indeed is a value, then its status as such is no more dependent on its actually being valued than the symmetry of a landscape depends on its actually being discerned. Values admit of being prized, but that does not mean that they actually are, any more than a task's being difficult means that anyone actually attempts it. To be of value is to *deserve* to be valued, but that of course need not actually happen: the value of things can be underestimated of overestimated or totally overlooked. Neither the items that have value not the facts of their being of value depend on apprehending minds for their reality. And this holds in particular for "ontological" values like economy, simplicity, regularity, uniformity, etc., that figure in the axiological explanation of laws. The being of values does *not* consists in their being perceived: any more than does the being of most other sorts of things.

Accordingly, given that it is values rather than purposes that function in axiological explanation, these explanations can be entirely impersonal. Values here function directly rather than via the mediation of agents. Of course the *cultivation* or the *promotion* of a certain value can in principle be somebody's purpose. But that is something beside the point of present concerns. The idea is simply that the system in question is value-tropic (as it were) in that it inherently tends to realize certain value-endowed conditions (maintaining stability, achieving symmetry, prolonging longevity, operating efficiently, etc.) But, of course, the system that comports itself in this way need not overtly *hold* such a value—like a physical system that pursues the path of least resistance, it may well be the sort of thing for which the conscious *adoption* of values is simply not possible. To reemphasize: when its modus operandi establishes commitment to an certain value, nature need not "seek" value any more than water need "seek" its own level. We need not anthropomorphize here, even as a claim to end-directed transactions in the world ("Nature abhors a vacuum") is without any implications about a purposively operating mind. A system can be goal directed through its inherent natural "programming" (e.g., heliotropism or homeostasis) without any admixture of *purpose* even as a conservation of energy principle need not be held on the basis of nature's "seeking" to conserve energy.

And so, while axiological explanations fail to address a question for which design explanations have an answer—namely the causal question "How do values operate productively so as to bring particular laws to actualization?"—this reflects no demerit. For this question is simply inappropriate. Values don't "operate" in the purposively causal order at all. Value-considerations render certain law-possibilities "real" in somewhat the same way as law-conformity renders certain event possibilities "real." The issue of a specifically *purposive* efficacy simply does not arise.

Optimalism has many theoretical advantages. Here is just one of them. It is conceivable, one might contend, that the *existence* of the world (i.e., of *a* world) is a necessary fact while nevertheless its *nature* (i.e., of *which* world is contingent. And this would mean that separate and potentially different answers would have to be provided for the questions "Why is there anything at all?" and "Why is the character of existence as is—why is it that this particular world exists?" However, an axiogenetic approach enjoys the advantage of rational economy in that it proceeds uniformly here. It provides a single uniform rationale for both answers—namely that "this is for the best." It accordingly also enjoys the significant merit of providing for the rational economy of explanatory principles.

But is not optimalism merely a version of wishful thinking? Not necessarily. For even as in personal life what is best for us is all too often not at all what we individuals want so in metaphysics what is abstractly for the best is very unlikely to bear any close relationship to what we would want to have if we humans could have things our way.

7. FURTHER DIFFICULTIES

However, a threatening difficulty seems to arise in the form of a possibility range that is evaluatively "topless"—that is, which does not have some alternatives that are optimal in the sense of not being bettered by any others.[52] In such a range each alternative is surpassed by yet another that is better. And so on optimalistic principles it would transpire that there are no real possibilities at all. Within *such* a range there will be no optimum and thus no possibility of actualization. Here optimalism must take the bull by the horns. Insofar as situations can be imagined which—like that of a "topless" infinite alternative spectrum—could raise difficulties for the theory, it could and should simply be seen as part and parcel of optimalism to assert that such situations cannot actually arise: that a reality that is benign all the way through is thereby such that as to exclude such a problem-

atic situation with respect to what is really possible. As optimalism sees it, the very fact that toplessness conflicts with optimalism excludes it from the range of real possibilities.

But what if there is a PLURALITY of perfection-contributory features so interrelated that more of the one demands less of the other? Here everything is bettered *in some respect* by something else, so that to all appearances it would result that *nothing* is s synoptically and comprehensively all-in best.

However, in such cases one can—and should—resort to a *function of combination* that allows for the interaction of those different value parameters. For example, with two operative value-making factors, say cheapness (that is, inverse acquisition cost) and durability in the case of a 100-watt light bulb, one will use the ratio of (cost of purchase) to (hours of usability) or equally cost/hour of service as a measure of merit. This prospect possibilizes the reduction of the multi-factor case to the situation of a single compound and complex factor, so that optimization is once again possible. And that this is possible is guaranteed by optimalism itself; it is part and parcel of the best possible order of things that optimalism should be operable within it.

Yet is such a theory of axiological ontogenesis not defeated by the objection: If it were the case that value explains existence, then why isn't the world altogether perfect in every regard?

The answer lies in the inherent complexity of value. An object that is of any value at all is subject to a *complex* of values. For it is the fundamental fact of axiology that every evaluation-admitting object has a *plurality* of evaluative features. Consider an automobile Its parameters of merit clearly includes such factors as speed, reliability, repair infrequency, safety, operating economy, aesthetic appearance, road-handle ability. But in actual practice such features are interrelated. It is unavoidable that they trade off against one another: more of *A* means less of *B*. It would be ridiculous to have a supersafe car with a maximum speed of two miles per hour. It would be ridiculous to have a car that is inexpensive to operate but spends three-fourths of the time in a repair shop.

In any multicriterial setting, "absolute" perfection is simply an impossibility. Perfection—maximum realization of every value dimension all-at-once—is simply unrealizable because of the interaction of parameters: in designing a car you cannot maximize both safety and economy of operation. Analogously the world is not absolutely perfect—perfect in *every* respect—because this sort of absolute perfection is in principle impossible

of realization. And of course it makes no sense to ask for the impossible. Accordingly, the objection "If value is the key to existence, the world would be perfect" collapses. All that will follow on axiogenetic principles is that the world will exemplify an optimal interactive balance of the relevant natural factors. An optimally realizable best need not be "perfect" in the naive sense of that term which unrealistically demands maximality in every relevant respect. Leibniz took the right approach here: optimalism does not maintain that the world is absolutely perfect but just that it be the best that is possible—that it outranks the available alternatives.

It is an inherently inevitable features of the nature of things—an inevitable "fact of life"—that value realization is always a matter of balance, of trade-offs, of compromise. The reality of it is that value factors always compete in matters of realization. A concurrent maximum in *every* dimension is simply unavoidable in this (or indeed any other realistically conceivable) world. All that one can ever reasonably ask for is an auspicious *combination* of values.

But—really!—how can sensible people possibly embrace the conception that the inherently best alternative is thereby automatically the actual (true) one. Does not the world's all too evident imperfection stand decisively in the way here?

The matter is not all that simple, however. For the issue is going to pivot on the question of what "inherently best" means. If it means "best" from that angle of your desires, or of my interests, or even of the advantage of homo-sapiens in general, then clearly the thesis looses its strong appeal. For such plausibility that "best" had best be construed as looking to the condition of existence-as-a-whole rather than one particular privileged individual or group. Optimality in this context is clearly not going to be a matter of the affective welfare or standard of living of some particular sector of existence; it is going to have to be a metaphysical good of some synoptic and rather abstract sort that looks to the condition of the whole.

Accordingly the objection: "is not optimalism simply too Pollyanna-ish to be plausible" can be met effectively. The optimalist need not simply shut his eyes to the world's all too evident parochially considered imperfections. For what the optimalist can and should do is to insist that because of the intricate inherent interrelationships among value parameters an "imperfection" in this or that respect must be taken in stride because they have to be there for an optimal *overall* combination of value to be realized. There is, in fact, a point of view from which optimalism is a position that looks to be not so much optimistic as deeply pessimistic. For it holds that

even the best of possible arrangements is bound to exhibit very real imperfections from the angle of narrowly parochial concerns or interests.

Yet is such a theory of axiological ontogenesis not defeated by the objection: If it really were the case that value explains existence, then why isn't the world altogether perfect?

The answer lies in the inherent complexity of value. An object that is of any value at all is subject to a *complex* of values. For it is the fundamental fact of axiology that every evaluation-admitting object has a *plurality* of evaluative features. Take a car—an automobile. Here the relevant parameters of merit clearly include such factors as speed, reliability, repair, infrequency, safety, operating economy, aesthetic appearance, road-handle ability. But in actual practice such features are interrelated. It is unavoidable that they trade off against one another: more of *A* means less of *B*. It would be ridiculous to have a supersafe car with a maximum speed of two miles per hour. It would be ridiculous to have a car that is inexpensive to operate but spends three-fourths of the time is a repair shop. It is an inherently inevitable features of the nature of things—an inevitable "fact of life"—that value realization is always a matter of balance, of trade-offs, of compromise. The reality of it is that value factors always compete in matters of realization. A concurrent maximum in *every* dimension is simply unavoidable in this (or indeed any other realistically conceivable) world. All that one can ever reasonably ask for is an auspicious *combination* of values. Perfection—maximum realization of every value dimension all-at-once—is simply unrealizable. And of course it makes no sense to ask for the impossible. And so the objection "If value is the key to existence, the world would be perfect" proves to be untenable. All that will follow on axiogenetic principles is that the world will exemplify an optimal balance of the relevant evaluative factors. An optimally realizable best need not be "perfect" in the normal sense of that term which unrealistically demands value maximality in every relevant respect. What prevents optimalism from being too Pollyanna-ish to be plausible is the deeply pessimistic acknowledgment that even the best of possible arrangements is bound to exhibit very real shortcomings.

8. CONCLUSION

Axiological explanation has at its core the idea of explaining a state of affairs on the basis of the considerations that it is for the best. It pivots on what might be characterized as the central principle of Leibnizian opti-

mism, the actual states of affairs are as they are because on the basis of their very optimality. The punch-line is the value-invoking principle "It is that way because that's for the best."

The operation of a Law of Optimality does indeed require a manifold of suitable value parameters, invoking certain physically relevant features (symmetry, economy, or the like) as merit-manifesting factors. And it is—or should be—clear that the optimization at issue here must be geared to a "scientifically reputable" theory of some suitable kind, coordinate with a complex of physically relevant factors of a suitable kind. After all, many a possible world will maximize a "value" of *some* sort (confusion and nastiness included). It is its (presumed) gearing to a positive value which like economy or elegance is plausibly identifiable as physically relevant—contingently identifiable as such subject to scientific inquiry—that establishes optimalism as a reasonable proposition and ultimately prevents the thesis "optimalism obtains because that's for the best" from declining into vacuity.

And so, in the end, the present axiological approach differs decisively from that of Leibniz and his latter-day congeners such as John Leslie. They propose to answer the question "Why is it that the value-optimizing world should be the one that actually exists?" with reference to the will of a God who *chooses* to adopt value optimization as a creative principle. Leibniz—as we saw at the outset—was committed to an idea that it is necessary to account for the obtaining of a principle in terms of the operation of an existing entity (specifically the agency of an intelligent being—viz. God). Instead, an axiological approach sees the explanatory bearing of a principle of value as direct, without mediation through the agency of a substantial being (however extraordinary) as final and fundamental.[53] On grounds of explanatory economy, at least, purpose is thus something that we would be well-advised to forego if we can actually manage to do so.

And on this approach the answer to the question "Why should the Real be Rational" is given on just exactly an optimalistic basis: "It is so because that is for the best." It is just this line of response that provides the mainsail of axiological explanation.

But is optimalism's stance not vitiating circular? By no means. For consider this: If there is going to be anything worthy of the name of an ultimate explanation there is just no alternative to its being self-validating. At this stage—and of course it is an exceptional and altogether extraordinary one. Self-validation is not necessarily circular at all but pro-

foundly virtuous. For it is a crucial and indispensable to an ultimate experiment that it does not require anything else for its own validation.

The upshot of these deliberations is that once one is willing to have recourse to axiological explanation in the explanation there no longer remains any good reason to think that both the existence and the rationality of the real is something deeply so problematic that it remains inexplicably unintelligible. The explanation that is operative here is, to be sure is a drastically unusual and extra-ordinary one. But then of course the question of why Reality should be explicable is a highly unusual and extra-ordinary question and it is a cardinal principle of cognitive sagacity that if one asking an extra-ordinary question one must expect an extra-ordinary answer.[54]

Chapter 9

THE REVOLT AGAINST ABSOLUTES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

1. STAGESETTING

It is notorious that philosophers disagree. So, are there any examples at all of something that is typical and characteristic of 20th century philosophizing—a position or doctrine held consensually or at least widely across the spectrum of thinkers of the period? The present discussion will argue that there indeed is such a widely shared position, to wit the assault against absolutes within philosophy itself, and that this anti-absolutism is a doctrinal stance to which mainstream American philosophers in particular have made a signal and significant contribution during the 20th century.

Earlier, from classical antiquity onwards, philosophers aspired to an insight into the nature of things that achieved various absolutistic desiderata, preeminently including certainty, necessity, exactness, universality, timelessness, and objectivity. Viewing such absolutistic factors as the salient features of arithmetic and geometry, these hall-marks of mathematics have served philosophers as the paradigm of an exact science which their own subject can and should emulate. But in the course of the 20th century this view of the matter became seriously unraveled with the diffusion of the idea that the quest for absolutes is doomed to failure. And, as most of the century's philosophers came to see it—particularly among the Americans—the problem lies not in the shortfall of our insight but in the overreach of our philosophical aspirations. It is thus fair to say the with the possible exception of religious scepticism, no philosophical doctrine has more decidedly characterized the naturalistic general tenor of 20th century philosophy—in its American setting above all—than its opposition to absolutism, which runs as a recurrent Leitmotiv throughout the era.

It is instructive to consider the unfolding and the ramifications of this development. In doing so we will move sequentially through the entire spectrum of prime absolutes: certainty, necessity, exactness, universality, timelessness, and objectivity.

2. THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTES: CERTAINTY

A contention is certain if its acceptability is beyond *reasonable* doubt. (The circumstance that some people doubt it is not decisive impediment to its certainty. Not all people are reasonable.) After the close of the 19th century, the assault on certainty has been a salient feature of American philosophizing. Its launching platform was the fallibilism of C. S. Peirce. And William James carried the battle-flag forwards, complaining that:

> In philosophy the absolute tendency has had everything its own way. The characteristic sort of happiness, indeed, which philosophies yield has mainly consisted in the conviction felt by each successive school or system that by it bottom-certitude had been attained. "Other philosophies are collections of opinions, mostly false; *my* philosophy gives standing-ground forever,"—who does not recognize in this the key-note of every system worthy of the name? A system, to be a system at all, must come as a *closed* system, reversible in this or that detail, perchance, but in its essential features never![55]

John Dewey too proved himself an enthusiastic opponent of certainty. And latter-day neo-pragamatists like Richard Rorty were only too eager to join in. Overall, scepticism regarding philosophical certainty has come to pervade the North American scene.

To be sure, the rejection of certainty in 20th century philosophy was by no means confined to American pragmatism. For example, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*—which could just as well have been entitled *Against Certainty*—carried the fight into domain of mathematics itself, the very citadel of the traditional stronghold of certainty. And following the lead of Rudolf Carnap philosophers of positivistic inclinations questioned the prospect of achieving any certain information in philosophical matters—that is, when they did not reject altogether the potential of the field as a while. And philosophers of naturalistic indication who saw no reason to concede to philosophy the prospect of an absolute certitude that they deemed absent from the natural sciences themselves. All in all, then, the Cartessian quest for irrefragable certainty in philosophy was rejected by a wide spectrum of 20th century as a harmful illusion.

3. THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTES: NECESSITY

Necessity has been yet another focal area in the struggle against philosophical absolutes. Early on in the 20th century the pursuit of necessity was still very much in vogue. And here, mathematics again served as the paradigmatic ideal, and theorists from Gottlob Frege to Kurt Gödel probed for justificatory foundations to provide a cogent rationale for necessitarian claims, and Edward Husserl and his school projected such efforts into philosophy with his theory of "intuition into essences" (Wesensschau). But with the rise of logical positivism (or "empiricism") a fervent opposition to a metaphysically laden doctrine of essences and necessities became prominent.

Ever since Greek antiquity philosophers had contended the issue of what is necessary in the nature of things (*phusis*) and what is determined by mere human convention (*nomos*). But now the scale dipped decidedly in favor of the later. As William James saw it: the triad of the human serpent" covered all. And other pragmatically inclined American philosophers like C. I. Lewis and the later Rudolf Carnap joined in by insisting that all that could be found are conveniences and efficiencies where other thinkers had seen necessities.

A leading development in this circumstance was W. V. Quine's rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction. And while some possible world logicians such as David Lewis and Robert Stalnacker sought to rehabilitate necessitation via possible-world theory in semantics, other philosophers (the present writer included) viewed necessitarianism as a *doctrina non grata* and sought to close off this sort of back-door to it.[56]

4. THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTES: EXACTNESS AND DETAIL

The sorts of claims to which philosophy traditionally looks for answering its questions envision exactness, precision, detail. In philosophy's earliest days when the Socrates of Plato's dialogues interrogated his interlocutors regarding matters of truth, knowledge, goodness, justice, and the like—the aim of the enterprise was to arise at an understanding of ideas that is precise, exact, and accurate in detail. Traditionally, philosophers have never been content with answers that indicate roughly or approximately how matters stand. Detailed precision has been seen as the essential to the enterprise.

But the twentieth century has seen some significant backtracking in this regard. For one thing, the rationale of "ordinary language" philosophy that was in vogue in Britain (and especially Oxford) after World War II held in theory—and manifested in practice—that in its concern with such concepts as truth, knowledge, goodness, etc., philosophizing must have itself on the actually accepted usage of real term and should not endeavor to endow them with an precision that our actual usage of such terms does not actually warrant.

And American pragmatism also moved in this general direction. Insisting that terms and concepts must be seen as communicative tools, pragmatists rejected the project of endowing them with clarity and detail beyond their natural use. After all, we do not ask that a yardstick make its measurements to the nearest millimeter (let alone micron). In problem-solving as elsewhere clarity, exactness, precision, and detail are not ends in themselves—we require only as much of them as is needed for the purposes at hand. And, so pragmatists like James and Dewey argued, the same alternative must govern the philosopher's concern for the everyday-life ideas and concepts with which philosophy ultimately deals.

Then too there are those who argue, with Nancy Cartwright, that the philosophy of science, like the sciences themselves, has unjustifiably laid claim to an exactness of detail that the world's more complicated realites do not provide for.[57] All in all, the century has seen—especially in America—thinkers who deny to philosophical deliberation the prospect of realizing a precision in the resolution of its problems.

5. THE ATTACK ON ABSOLUTES: UNIVERSALITY

Universality is yet another of the absolutes whose role in philosophy has been under attack. Traditionally universal claims have pervaded philosophy. "All men are rational beings," "All lies are immoral. "Beliefs open to doubt never qualify as knowledge. But some philosophers regard claims to synoptic totality along these lines as inherently problematic. The uniformity that universality requires is at odds with the variability and density of the complex matters at issue. And there is much to be said for construing such philosophical generalizations as requiring a less rigorous reading that forgoes totality and limits itself to what is typical, insisting that all such philosophical generalizations are subject to qualification and exceptions—this very claim itself included. Such a position foreshadowed in the pragmatism of James and Dewey and in the historicism of R. G. Colling-

wood.[58] And it has been argued in explicit detail in the present author's 1994 book on *Philosophical Standardism*.[59]

The problem with universality in philosophy is that the discipline generally addresses matters of human concern and human affairs and that in this domain this domain is notorious for unusual conditions and extraordinary circumstances. It is wrong to take people's property without their knowledge and permission—but what if one needs their ladder to save somebody's life. It is inappropriate to act on insufficient evidence, but what if we are in a situation where suspending judgment immobilizes action in a way that causes disaster? Exceptional circumstances will often arise in human affairs in theory—and occasionally in practice as well. Throughout philosophy one can substantiate many generalizations "as a rule" with which one nevertheless must, on occasion, acknowledge the extraordinary circumstance that make for exceptions.

6. THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTES: TIMELESSNESS

The timelessness of truth was perhaps the first of the traditional absolutes to come under attack. The post-Hegelian era saw the emergence in philosophical thought of a new emphasis on history and historical development. In the era from Descartes up to Kant it had been mathematics and the mathematical sciences—especially physics—that were seen to provide the ideal for rational inquiry. But in Hegel's wake the history-geared human sciences came to be viewed as the model for philosophical understanding. And a host of influential thinkers emerged in Germany—Dilthey and Erdmann prominent among them—to advocate a "historicism" that put historical developments in transient social and cultural contexts at the forefront of philosophical concern. This school of thought insisted that philosophy must put aside its traditional aspiration to resolving its questions by answers having the status of timeless, eternal truths. In philosophy, as elsewhere, so these thinkers urged, we simply have to do the best we can with the materials available in our day. One cannot go beyond the opportunities afforded by the resources of one's time.

As regards the Anglo-Saxon world this line of thought found only a limited acceptance in Britain, with R. G. Collingwood as perhaps its only significant exponent. But in the USA it greatly influenced the thought of C. S. Peirce and his pragmatist successors. And the last third of the twentieth century it gained currency through the work of Thomas Kuhn. Moreover, its impact on theory was matched by its impact on philosophical practice—

especially in the philosophy of science—by a shift from a concern for general principles and pervasive tendencies to a justification of case studies of particular episodes with a view to particularized conditions and local circumstances. Specialized case-studies become the order of the day and the search for timeless generalities came to be seen among philosophers—philosophers of science in particular—as the mistaken aspirations of a naïve and now happily bygone day.

7. THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTES: OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity is a matter of something's being so in fact independently of what people think to be so. It pivots on the question: "What is the case in relation to such-and-such a matter?" rather than "What do people think to be the case in relation to such-and-such a matter?" This issue is of course made poignant by the fact that people cannot answer the question "Tell me what is the case but do this entirely independently of what you think to be so!" For this, of course, is an absurdity—a request for doing something that is logically impossible. Accordingly, objectivity is something of an idealization. Exactly as with the other absolutes it is going to prove beyond convenient reach.

On this basis, objectivity (impersonality, unrestricted cogency) is that among all absolutes which has fared most harshly at the hands of the twentieth century. Here relativism, subjectivism, and "that's-just-what-you-happen-to-believe" thinking has pervaded the landscape of thought in every sector. After all, interpretations—those of evidence specifically included—are interpreter-correlative because they have to make use of background information and prioritization on whose basis they do (and must) rely in devising their interpretative version of the issues. Here the salient question takes the form "How does such-and-such an issue look to you (or "to members of your group)?"

8. A FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE

The 20th century's antipathy to absolutes can be regarded as part of a wider phenomenon—the rejection of norms. For as we have seen, absolutes are *normative* in nature, part of what is appropriate rather than merely actual, of what people ought to do rather than merely what they actually do. And across the entire spectrum of human affairs—ranging from speech and thought to behavior and action—twentieth century intellectuals have

tended to distrust, dislike, and reject normative concerns. The diffusion of Darwinism had led Western intellectuals to see critical norms as a convenient human countenance and to regard not only history but all of culture is produced by the pens of the victors. The anti-normativity of the age can be seen in this light as part of the larger cynicism characteristic of 20th century disillusion. In this spirit Martin Heidegger dismissed all those absolute truths of traditional philosophy as no more than "remnant of Christian theology in the problem field of philosophy."[60]

And so, in viewing absolutes as unattainable, some prominent schools of twentieth century thought have proposed discontenancing philosophizing altogether as an inappropriate and illegitimate enterprise. Logical positivism as well as some extreme versions of hermeneutics and of pragmatism have taken exactly this line. They in effect say, let us abandon philosophy and replace it by the theoretical study of science (positivism) or of human culture and creativity (hermeneutics) or of social interaction (pragmatism) or of the history of thought and ideas (historicism). And in urging the abandonment of philosophy and its replacement by some suitably cognate but practicable mode of inquiry each of these ventures has found prominent exponents in the course of twentieth century thought.

However, other schools of thought do not favor an abandonment of philosophy and its replacement by something else, but rather propose a revision in the aims and objectives of philosophy by lowering the bar of its aspirations. This line of thought brings us to the theme of realism—and not so much realism *in* philosophy but rather realism *about* philosophy with lower expectations along the lines of the contrasts regarded in Display 1.

Display 1

SOME CONTRASTS

Absolute	*Alternative*
Certainty	Plausibility
Necessity	Cogency
Timelessness	Timeliness
Universality	Generality
Exactness	Approximation
Objectivity	Contextuality

On this basis of diminished aspirations various philosophers have proposed what is in effect a transformation of philosophy into a substantially less ambitious human-sciences enterprise. But, of course, whatever its merits, such a proceeding itself encounters problems of self-consistency when carried out (as is usually the case) in a dogmatically absolutistic spirit.

9. ANTI-PHILOSOPHY AS THE NEW ABSOLUTE

The rejection of absolutes has had the consequence that one of the most strongly characteristic features of 20th century philosophizing has been the rejection of philosophy as traditionally conducted. The theses of philosophy are meaningless due to a lack of testability, said the logical positivists and logical empiricists. They violate the connections of proper usage, said the analysts of the ordinary language school. They address questions that cannot properly arise, said Wittgenstein and his acolytes. They reflect the parochial culture prejudices of a Eurocentric culture said relativists of varying prominence. They are predicated on incorrect presuppositions claimed the historicists, they are based on historically outdated and mis-

guided world-views claimed Heidegger and his followers. And of course the charges of outmoded absolutism fueled the flames of all of their destructive fires. And yet, strange to say, it is exactly this, very flagship of the attack on absolutes that is the most vulnerable, the least justified aspects of 20th century anti-philosophizing. For a dogmatic anti-absolution—of whatever motivation—has real difficulties. Ironically, it is precisely the impracticability of attaining strict universality in philosophical matters upon which anti-absolutes are want to dwell that renders a categorical in across-the-board rejection of absolutes itself problematic.

It was common among major thinkers of the 20th century to argue that mundane situation in the world's scheme of things affords us no pathway to the establishment of absolutes. But this seemingly plausible line of thought overlooks an important consideration that the very concepts that underpin our linguistic operations provide for various absolute-encoding interrelations. For in the constituting of knowledge facts flow through the channels provided by concepts. It is virtue of the circumstance that "being an apple tree" answers to a certain concept that yon particular tree's features make it appropriate to class it as an apple tree. And similarly with (say) moral concepts. What makes it appropriate to class that action as wrong is its falling within the scope of the concept of "an infliction of needless pain." Facts flow through concepts to yield not only botanical characterizations, but moral characterizations as well. And it is this that endows these absolutes principles grounded in conceptual relationships—with their applicability and significance.[61]

After all, a general claim to the effect that *A*'s must be *B*'s can and often does inhere in the logical-conceptual proprieties in the consideration that one could not properly speaking call something an *A* unless it were a *B*. Consider for example the epistemological thesis that knowledge is only possible with truths: that only true facts can ever be known. The crux here is that we would never properly speaking endorse a claim to knowledge where the item at issue is something we do not accept as true: If we deemed *p* false we would never say "*X* knows *p*" but "*X* believes *p*" or—at most—"*X thinks* he knows *p*." The groundrules of careful usage block any room for quarreling with the contention at issue, viz. that knowledge—that is, actual and authentic knowledge—must be true. They very proprieties of coherent discourse provide for the absoluteness of this contention.

And so the long and short of it is that—short of abandoning linguistic-semantical clarity—there are absolutes in every sector of philosophy:

- in ethics: It is wrong to mislead someone willingly but without any reason.

- in epistemology: If you claim to know something to be so then you cannot coherently think that it may possibly not be so.

- in metaphysics: Only a creature capable of making a free choice among alternatives can be characterized as rational.

- in social philosophy: A distributive argument that does not give equal weight to equivalent claims is inherently unfair.

To be sure, the matter is complicated. Thus consider such ethical these as

- It is wrong to inflict needless harm on people

or again

- It is wrong to cause pain to people solely for one's own pleasure.

Stripped or their guiding qualifications ("needless," "solely for one's own pleasure" there become unacceptable (think of injuring *X* by a rough push that gets him out of the way of a onrushing bus, or of causing *Y* pain in the course of a dental operation). But these indicated qualifications save the day for absoluteness. Malice and *Schadenfreude* are the very paradigms of wrongdoing and these theses consequently obtain as absolutes on essentially conceptual grounds.

There is, in fact, a cogent and conclusive reason why absolutes should be taken in stride rather than exiled from philosophy. The key lies in a philosophical *standardism* that views philosophy not as engaged in an uncompromising pursuit of absolutes as addressing the issues in terms of what is certain, necessary, universal—but rather with a view making matters clear in regard to what is normal, ordinary, standard. Such a position does not proscribe absolutes but rather to see them as special cases obtaining in special conditions—exceptions in special circumstances rather than the mandated rule. It would, after all, be entirely in the spirit of scepticism about philosophical absolutes to be skeptical as well about an absolutely universal and unqualified proscription of absolutes.[62]

The lesson of such deliberations is straightforward. A sensible anti-absolutism must adopt the medicine of its own prescribing and be willing to take a more flexible and undogmatic line. It makes perfectly good sense to adopt on Occam's Razor-reminiscent attitude toward absolutes and accept that they are not to be multiplied beyond the necessity of need. Yet one ought also to realize that the very concepts that are at work in our philosophizing will by their inherent meaning and purport involve certain requisites in a way that renders absoluteness unavoidable.

And so anti-absolutism, viewed as a systemic doctrine, is untrue to itself and thus ultimately incoherent. For the all-out rejection of absolutes is itself an absolutistic position. The sensible position is not to reject absolutes dogmatically but to be very cautious and conservative in their endorsement. Accordingly, a moderate absolutism not a contradiction in terms!

Accordingly, it seems not unfair to say that in its all-out rejection of philosophical absolutes to which 20th century philosophers have been inclined carries matters too far. Here, as elsewhere, what seems best warranted is a middle of the road position between untenable extremes. For the very antipathy to dogmatic uniformity that characterizes the era's sensibilities will—or should— militate against an absolutistic position in relation to philosophical absolutes. In sum, then, there is good reason to see the anti-absolutism of 20th Century thought as itself absolutistically misguided and in need of replacement by a position that is far less doctrinaire.

NOTES

[1] See Immanuel Kant, *Foundations in the Metaphysics of Minds*, tr. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs Merril, 1959).

[2] William James was surely right to insist that "There is no point of view absolutely public and universal." (*Talks to Teachers on Psychology* [New York: Henry Holt, 1899], p. 4.)

[3] This chapter is based on a paper of the same title initially published in *The Monist*, vol. 86 (2003), pp. 469-80.

[4] On values as tertiary properties see also the author's *The Validity of Values* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[5] See R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 145, cf. also John M. Mackie, *Ethics* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 41.

[6] G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), Chap. I.

[7] For the Routley's argumentation here see their "Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics," in D. S. Mannison, M. S. McRobbie, and R. Routley (eds.), *Environmental Philosophy* (Cinberra: Austrailisn National University Press, 1980).

[8] The deliberations of this section have profited from an e-mail exchange with Professor Owen Goldin.

[9] The considerations at issue here are set out in greater detail in the author's *Conceptual Idealism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).

[10] Note that it is not homogeneously a means-end hierarchy. (Steak is not a *means* to food, it is a *kind* of food.)

[11] It sounds circular to say that rationality consists in pursuing valid ends by appropriate means, seeing that rationality itself will have to be the arbiter of validity and appropriateness. But *this* sort of "circularity"

[12] Note that this comes to "what rationality *as we understand it* is."

[13] Note, too, that different top-level finalities can lead to priority conflicts through competing demands on resources. Health and knowledge, or family life and professional life, for example, may certainly conflict—not, to be sure, as abstract de-

siderata but in the competing demands that arise in the course of their practical implementation. Insofar as such conflicts are rationally resolvable at all, still other finalities must be involved as arbiters. Even at the highest levels, our valid aims are not really "ultimate"—save for their own domain.

[14] The analogy of natural law is helpful: "Theft, murder, adultery and all injuries are forbidden by the laws of nature; but which is to be called theft, what murder, what adultery, what injury in a citizen, this is not to be determined by the natural but by the civil law. . . ." (Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, chap. IV, sect. 16). St. Thomas holds that appropriate human law must be subordinate to the natural law by way of "particular determination"; with different human laws, varying from place to place, nevertheless representing appropriate concretizations of the same underlying principle of natural law. (See *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, questions 95-6.)

[15] But just who are the "we" at issue. Clearly, those who are members of our linguistic community—those who realize that when we speak of "morality" we mean *morality* (with the various things involved therein), and not, say, basket weaving.

[16] See Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture and Behavior* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1962); *idem*, "Ethical Relativity; Sic et Non," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 52 (1955): 663-77; R. Redfield, "The Universally Human and the Culturally Variable," *The Journal of General Education*, 10 (1967): 150-160; Ralph Linton, "Universal Ethical Principles: An Anthropological View" in R. N. Anshen (ed.), *Moral Principles of Action* (New York: Harper, 1952); *idem*, "The Problem of Universal Values," in R. F. Spencer (ed.), *Method and Perspective in Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954).

[17] Aspects of these issues are helpfully discussed in Susan Wolf, "Two Levels of Pluralism," *Ethics*, vol. 102 (1992), pp. 785-98.

[18] This chapter is based on a paper of the same title initially published in Mathias Guttmann et. al. (eds.), *Kultur-Hundlung-Wissenschaft* (Weiderwiest: Verlbrueck-Wissenschaft, 2002), pp. 285-301.

[19] Cf. Judith Jarvis Thomson, *The Realm of Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), Introduction.

[20] On coherence criteriology see my *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) as well as ch. 2, 'Truth as Ideal Coherence' in my *Forbidden Knowledge* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), pp. 17-27.

[21] This chapter is based on a paper of the same title initially publisher in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 35 (2001), pp. 5-12.

[22] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Vol. V (Cambridge, MA; 1934), sect. 5.366.

[23] The unavailingness of global validations—pragmatic or otherwise—is stressed by Gerhard Vollmer in his instructive book, *Wissenschaftstheorie am Einsatz* (Stuttgart: Hirzel, 1993), pp. 149-50.

[24] See *Is There a Single Right Interpretation*, ed. by Michael Krausz (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

[25] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III2996b28ff; *On Interpretation* VI, 17a33ff. On the issues see R. M. Dancy, *Sense and Contradiction: A Study in Aristotle* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975).

[26] For an interesting examination of connected issues see Marion Biagioli and Peter Galison (eds.) *Scientific Authorship* (London: Routledge, 2003). The deliberations of this volume though relevant to our present concerns, are differently oriented. For one thing they deal with authorship rather than credit. And for another they address factual issues regarding how authorship works and not normative issues of how credit should be allocated or partitioned.

[27] On these issues see Stephen M. Stigler, *Statistics on the Table: The History of Statistical Concepts and Methods* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[28] On this whole episode see the article by L. K. Altman M.D. in *The New York Times*, Tuesday, March 7, 2000, pages D7 and D10.

[29] The history of inquiry—in science and elsewhere—is, of course, a mixture of progress and error, of finding and mis-finding, of getting information and misinformation. And we have no alternative here to seeing "discovery" as a matter of discovery *facts*, taking this to mean the facts as we see them from the standpoint of the present state of the field.

[30] Clause (3) leads to complications here. For a mis-finding may well pave the way to an important finding, as, for example, Priestley's phlogiston led to Lavoisier's oxygen. That erroneous "discovery" may very well pave the way to an important discovery. It too is thus important—albeit only of historical rather than substantive importance. Thus if "merely historical" importance is to be excluded, then clause (3) would have to be qualified with respect to the truth-claims of the "finding" at issue.

[31] An informative treatment of cooperation in general, without, however, any specific reference to inquiry or research, in Raimo Tuomela, *Cooperation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000).

[32] "The central characteristic of a tenancy in common is simply that such tenant is deemed to own by himself, with most of the attributes of independent ownership, a physically individual part of the entire parcel." (Thomas F. Bergin and Paul G. Haskell, *Preface to Estates in Land and Future Interests*, 2nd ed., *University Textbook Series* (Foundation Press, 1991), p. 54

[33] With papers publishing research produced under conditions of multilateral *distributive* cooperation it makes sense to list the names of the contributors in order of decreasing shares. With those produced under conditions of multilateral *collective* cooperation an alphabetical or anti-alphabetical order should ideally be used standardly and systematically to synchronize the character of the inquiry.

[34] Of course even within the setting of teamwork there are often subordinate inquires that can be factored out into subordinate components for distributive pursuit. And some team members will generally deserve special credit on this basis. Thus one can often say that certain core contributions were due to one particular team member, which others then developed and refined in interactive fashion.

[35] What we have here is not an act-pragmatism ("Take that course of action which is optimally efficient and effective. . . ") because in the contingency of affairs individual outcomes are inherently less predictable than statistical tendencies. Observe that the situation is structurally much the same here as that in ethics in the case of act-utilitarianism vs. rule-utilitarianism.

[36] Carl G. Hempel, "Science Unlimited," *The Annals of the Japan Association for Philosophy of Science*, vol. 14 (1973), pp. 187-202. (See p. 200). Our italics.

[37] Note too that the question of the existence of facts is a horse of a very different color from that of the existence of things. There being no *things* is undoubtedly a possible situation, there being no *facts* is not (since if the situation were realized, this would itself constitute a fact).

[38] His willingness to subscribe to teleological/axiological explanation is clearly attested by his account of the rationale of the continuity of organic existence: "For since some existing things are eternal . . . while others are capable both of being and of not being, and since the good . . . is always accordingly to its own nature a cause of the better in things . . . for these reasons there is generation of animals." (*De Gener. Animalium*, 731b24-31).

[39] Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1903. See in particular §§ 50, 55, 57, 112-113.

[40] Henry Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1874), Bk. I, Chap. ix, §4.

[41] *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*; p. 40 of the Collier paperback edition.

[42] The prime spokesman for this line of thought within the Western philosophical tradition was G. W. Leibniz. A present-day exponent is John Leslie. (See the Appendix to this chapter.) See also the present author's *The Riddle of Existence* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1984).

[43] To make this work out, the value of a disjunction-alternative has to be fixed at the value of its optimal member, lest the disjunctive "bundling" of a good alternative with inferior rivals so operates at to eliminate it from competition.

[44] The operative perspective envisions a threefold order of necessity/possibility: the logico-conceptual, the ontological or proto-physical, and the physical. It accordingly resists the positivistic tendency of the times to dismiss or ignore that second, intermediate order of considerations. And this is only to be expected since people nowadays tend to see this intermediate realm as predicated in value considerations, a theme that is anathema to present-day scientism.

[45] After all, there is no reason of logico-theoretical principle why propositions cannot be self-certifying. Nothing vicious need be involved in self-substantiation. Think of "Some statements are true" or "This statement stakes a particular rather than universal claim."

[46] Optimalism is closely related to optimism. The optimist holds that "Whatever exists is for the best," the optimalist maintains the converse that "Whatever is for the best exists." However, when we are dealing with exclusive and exhaustive alternatives the two theses come to the same thing. If one of the alternatives $A, A_1, \ldots A_n$ must be the case, then if what is realized is for the best it follows automatically that the best is realized (and conversely).

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[49] Indeed an over-enthusiastic optimalist could take the line that theism hinges on optimalism rather than the reverse because: "God's own existence issues from optimalism: he exists because that's for the best."

[50] Indeed an over-enthusiastic optimalist could take the line that theism hinges on optimalism rather than the reverse because: "God's own existence issues from optimalism: he exists because that's for the best."

[51] For a useful collection of relevant texts see Donald R. Burrill, *The Cosmological Arguments: A Spectrum of Opinion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967). Two interesting recent accounts of the issues and their historical ramifications are: William L. Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); and William L. Craig, *The Cosmological Argument From Plato to Leibniz* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

[52] Leibniz saw the existence of the actual world as a decisive argument against hopelessness since existence could not be realized in a realm of topless meritoriousness. Here a benevolent creature would be effectively paralyzed.

[53] Our metaphysical invocation of a principle of value is akin to A. C. Ewing's theological application of similar ideas in his interesting article "Two 'Proofs' of God's Existence," *Religious Studies*, vol. 1 (1961), pp. 29-45. Ewing there propounds the argument that God's existence is to be accounted for axiologically: that he exists "because it was supremely good that God should exist" (p. 35). This approach has the substantial merit of avoiding Leibniz's tactic of grounding the efficacy of value in a preexisting deity by contemplating the prospect that value is so fundamental that the deity itself can be accounted for in its terms.

[54] On issues relevant to this chapter's deliberations see also the author's *The Riddle of Existence* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1984), and *Nature and Understanding* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000).

[55] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York and London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), pp. 12-13.

[56] Of course Americans were not alone in this. For example, the Ludwig Wittgenstein of his later, conventionalistic period affords another notable instance.

[57] See Nancy Cartwright, *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[58] See especially R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924) and *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

[59] The Aristotelian contrast between universality and that which obtains only mostly/generally/usually/normally has run as a continuing thread throughout my own thought. In the 1960's it figured in my work in formal logic in relation to the "Rescher quantifier" (see "Plurality Quantification Revisited," *Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 26 ne 1-2 (2004), pp. 1-5), and also in my work in the history of logic in relation to temporal modalities like "usually" or "mostly" (see *Temporal Modalities in Arabic Logic* [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1967]). It also figured in my work in the philosophy of the human sciences (see "Inexact Sciences," reference [in collaboration with Olaf Helmer]), and in metaphilosophy (see *Philosophical Standardism* [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994]).

[60] "Reste von christlicher Theologie unterhalb der philosophischen Problematik," *Sein un Zeit* (Leipzig: Niemeyer, 1923), p. 23.

[61] On these issues see the author's *Moral Absolutes* (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1989).

[62] The author's *Philosophical Standardism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994) not only concedes but elaborately supports the case against absolutes, but true to the spirit of anti-absolutism it does so on an undogmatic basis that envisions a limited scope to absolutistic contentions And the author's *Moral Absolutes* (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1989) follows through in this prospect by elaborating the case for such principles in the moral sphere.

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